An Old Shropshire Oak

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AN OLD SHROPSHIRE OAK

VOL. I.

AN OLD SHROPSHIRE OAK

BY THE LATE

JOHN WOOD WARTER

AUTHOR OF 'THE SEABOARD AND THE DOWN'
ETC.

EDITED BY RICHARD GARNETT, LL.D.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE late Rev. John Wood Warter is perhaps most generally known to the world as the son-in-law of Southey, and editor of his 'Common-Place Book,' the latter volumes of his 'Doctor,' and selections from his correspondence. His extraordinary acquaintance with literature, strong local attachments, and love of nature and mankind have nevertheless been manifested in the sketches of his Sussex parish published by him under the title of 'The Seaboard and the Down,' and are displayed on a much more conspicuous scale in the work now presented to the public. So copious is the amount of literary illustration amassed by the author's ceaseless study and indefatigable industry, that, extensive as the work still is, it has been found necessary to make very considerable retrenchments to adapt it in any degree to the exigencies of our busy and restless generation. The reader, it is believed, who can peruse it with the leisure and deliberation which the author brought to its composition, will not miss the enjoyment which attended the latter task.

The work is published by the writer's children. The concluding portion will follow as soon as possible.

October 1885.

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AN OLD SHROPSHIRE OAK.

Ὑπ' αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς περικαλλέϊ φηγῷ.

Iliad, E. 693.

The air that floated by me seemed to say,
'Write! thou wilt never have a better day.'
And so I did.

KEATS'S *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke*, Sept. 1816.

Pleraque eorum quæ retuli, quæque referam, parva forsitan et levia memoratu videri, non nescius sum.

TACIT. *Annal.* iv. c. 32.

Thus I entertain
The antiquarian humour, and am pleased
To skim along the surfaces of things,
Beguiling harmlessly the listless hours.

WORDSWORTH'S *Excursion*, p. 92.

Gravestones tell truth scarce forty years. Generations pass while some trees stand, and old families last not three oaks.

SIR T. BROWNE'S *Hydriotaphia, or Urn-burial*, c. v. vol. iii. 491. Ed. Wilkins.

A tree on which the host of dreams
Low murmur mystic things.

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON'S *Poems*; *Love's Sudden Growth*, p. 135.

CHAPTER I.

THE DREAM.

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.
The Tempest, iv. 1.

The dreams of sleeping men are, as I take it, all made up of the waking man's ideas, though for the most part oddly put together.—LOCKE, *Essay concerning the Human Understanding*, II. i. § 17.

Half our days we pass in the shadow of the earth ; and the brother of death exacteth a third part of our lives. A good part of our sleep is paid out with visions and fantastical objects, wherein we are confessedly deceived. — SIR THOMAS BROWNE, *On Dreams*, vol. iv. 355.

Jamque sopor mediis tellurem presserat horis,
Et circum tacito volitabant somnia mundo.
VAL. FLAC. *Arg.* iii. 417.

ONE night—it was a November night, 1860—I dreamed that the Old Oak by our old homestead in Shropshire—a grand fellow he is even to this day—stopped me on my way with a great rustling of his dried leaves—sparse and few, they were still lingering on the boughs—and told me he was very glad to see me, and that he had watched me from a boy, and that he never resented the great nails—*stab-nails* I thought he called them—which I had driven into his old trunk. To which he added, that if I would come and stop awhile in Shropshire and recruit my health and spirits, he would tell me his *own* history of six hundred years past, at the least, and make me acquainted likewise with the reminiscences of his father.

Such was the substance of the dream jotted down in the morning when I awoke. In the night, of course, one thought there was nothing odd or out of the way in being addressed by a venerable oak. It seemed no more unreal than the talk

of animate and inanimate things in Æsop's Fables does to the child whose faculties are just awaking, and who syllogises rather than reasons.

> As when upon a tranced summer's night
> Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
> Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
> Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
> Save from one gradual solitary gust
> Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
> As if the ebbing air had but one wave ;
> So came these words and went,—

and the Old Oak rustled no more, leaving me to sleep and dreamy meditation, such as Ovid implied in the words :—

> Constat Aventinæ tremuisse cacumina silvæ ;

no doubt, that is, the topmost leaves had rustled, and that the words were such as the oak might give out in the silence of the night :

> Illa dabat tacitis animo responsa quieto
> Noctibus.

Those who have read the 'Endymion' of Keats will have noted the words which follow, and they are applicable here :

> The Morphean fount
> Of that fine element that visions, dreams,
> And fitful whims of sleep are made of, streams
> Into its airy channels with so subtle,
> So thin a breathing, not the spider's shuttle
> Circled a million times within the space
> Of a swallow's nest door, could delay a trace,
> A tinting of its quality.

It is a pleasant thing to visit an old homestead and to tread over the haunts of one's youth once more—many, many times, again and again, are all too few. Every spot bears with it its tale. Hedgerows and hedges, woods and coppices, the streams with their shallows and their pools, the distant hills with their robe of blue, and the nearer ones with their hollows and outline clearly defined—the saddle-back of the district with the crags to which the fox took in extremities, no less than the champaign where Puss disported herself at will till the cry of the harriers caught her ear ; no single spot,

in fact, but it summons up cherished recollections, and the freshness of youth for a little while comes over the sobriety of eld, and one hears, or thinks one hears, the prattle of childhood and of joyous years.

Then again, if few out of many are left, sadder thoughts come over a man—not necessarily melancholy ones, however—for to look upon empty places once well filled, and to count the dead buried out of sight, assured that they have died in the Lord, this is no cause for sorrow of heart and sadness. The reverse, rather, for there is life in their end, and one grasps the proverb in entire faithfulness, which says—'A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children.' 'No man,' said Jeremy Taylor in his 'Entail of Curses,' art. 10, 'can be called happy till he be dead; nor then neither if he lived viciously. Look how God handles him in his children, in his family, in his grandchildren.' 'Nobody knows,' as the same great writer speaks, 'what precious mercies a pious father of a family may devise upon his succeeding generations. When a man teaches his family to know and fear God, then he scatters a blessing round about his habitation. No evil can come to the family whose stock is pious, and whose branches are holiness to the Lord. If any leaf or any bough shall fall untimely, God shall gather them up, to place them in His temple or at the foot of His throne; and that family must needs be blessed whom infidelity itself cannot make accursed. To sum up all, holy parents never eat their meal of blessing alone, but they make the room shine like the fire of a holy sacrifice; and a father's or a mother's piety makes all the home festival and full of joy from generation to generation.'

Thus impressed, and looking back to the days of my youth, I turned over the visions in my mind, and I thought I might interweave many interesting details of general English, as well as county, history with the oracular responses of the venerable Old Shropshire Oak—a county in which there are many such, at Boscobel, at Shelton, at Cressage—a corruption of Christ's-ake or Christ's Oak—which could a tale unfold, had they the power of speech, whereat the hearers would be marvellously astonied. Who, when he read Evelyn's 'Sylva' for the first time, was not delighted with his

account of old trees, their history and their localities? The scholar was sure once more to turn to his Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' and to his Lucan for 'the destructive fact that the enraged Cæsar perpetrated on the Massilian trees.' Much cause had he to say, 'To enumerate the incomparable uses of the oak were needless.' It was evidently his favourite tree. 'So precious was the esteem of it, that,' he adds, 'of old there was an express law amongst the Twelve Tables concerning the very gathering of the acorns, though they should be found fallen on another man's ground.'

Then again, there is a solemnity about great trees and forests with which one easily couples ancient superstitions, without referring to which even history is seldom well read or understood. Many years ago I gave considerable attention to the history of Scandinavia, as I was searching deep into the roots of our mother-tongue, and I never recollect to have been so much impressed upon some points as I was on travelling through the dark forests of Norway and Sweden, into which it was as much as the July sunbeam could do to penetrate. What feelings of awe did their deep silence inspire—not a note of a bird to be recognised in the vast pine forests mile after mile! Not only does a dead silence imbue the mind with all solemn thoughts, but it is no mean portion of the sublime. Virgil never showed himself a greater master of his craft than when amid his search into the wreck of Troy-town he put these words into the mouth of Æneas:

> Horror ubique animos, simul ipsa silentia terrent.

Hence it is that if the reader of Congreve's 'Mourning Bride' recollects no more of that drama he is sure to bear in mind the two passages which follow:

Almeria. It was a fancy'd noise, for all is hush'd.
Leonora. It bore the accent of a human voice.
Almeria. It was thy fear, or else some transient wind
Whistling through hollows of the vaulted aisle.
We 'll listen.
Leonora. Hark!
Almeria. No, all is hush'd and still as death. 'Tis dreadful!
How reverend is the face of this tall pile,
Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads

To bear aloft its arched and ponderous roof,
By its own weight made steadfast and immovable,
Looking tranquillity. It strikes an awe
And terror on my aching sight. The tombs
And monumental caves of death look cold,
And shoot a chillness to my trembling heart.
Give me thy hand, and let me hear thy voice ;
Nay, quickly ! speak to me, and let me hear
Thy voice ; mine own affrights me with its echoes.
Leonora. Let us return ; the horror of this place
And silence will increase your melancholy.

I was but a boy when these lines were read to me first, and not many miles from the spot where the Old Oak stood, but I never could forget them. The other passage alluded to is less memorable. It is Zara, the captive queen, who is speaking :

Silence and solitude are everywhere !
Thro' all the gloomy ways and iron doors
That hither lead, nor human face nor voice
Is seen or heard. A dreadful din was wont
To grate the sense, when enter'd here, from groans
And howls of slaves condemn'd, from clink of chains
And crash of rusty bars and creaking hinges :
And ever and anon the sight was dash'd
With frightful faces, and the meagre looks
Of grim and ghastly executioners.
Yet more this stillness terrifies my soul
Than did that scene of complicated horrors.

Hence the dead silence of interminable forests influenced the comparatively few inhabitants that surround it. From their dreaded solemnity it is that woods and marks (as our forefathers spake) and fens are the habitation of dragons, wild beasts, and fire-drakes. Worm, indeed, which is the old name for serpents and dragons, still gives name to many a village and town. Ormskirk, in Lancashire, is only Worms-kirk, and he who shall stand upon that grand headland, 'The Great Ormshead,' may think of the great dragon that once kept there, as well as of the great sea serpent, which was driven from the land to the ocean, and has never since been seen on those shores, the nearest approximation being the Kraken, in Pontoppidan. He that will see more about the

confusion of Orm and Worm has only to turn to the Danske Folkesaga.[1]

Since I knew Shakespeare well, which is from my boyhood upwards, the venerable old oak with which these pages are connected always called to my mind the old huntsman's oak in the 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' one out of a thousand instances of those superstitions which hang about old trees, whether in the New Forest, or in Windsor Forest, or in any other.

> There is an old tale goes, that Herne the hunter,
> Sometime a keeper here in Windsor Forest,
> Doth all the winter time, at still midnight,
> Walk round about an oak with great ragg'd horns ;
> And there he blasts the tree, and takes the cattle,
> And makes milch-kine yield blood, and shakes a chain
> In a most hideous and dreadful manner :
> You have heard of such a spirit ; and well you know
> The superstitious idle-headed eld
> Received, and did deliver to our age,
> This tale of Herne the hunter for a truth.

To which Page makes answer—and his answer, for aught I know, holds true still—

> Why, yet there want not many that do fear,
> In deep of night, to walk by this Herne's oak.

Just above, I mentioned the word 'mark,' and probably the Old Oak's father stood on what was the original 'mark' of our Saxon forefathers, before, in after days, it became a private estate or an *alod*. Even in his day he might have gone by the name of 'The Mark-Ira,' so many of which are to be found mentioned in old documents. This, however, is

[1] Many readers will call to mind Scott's lines in *Marmion* relative to St. Hilda's Monastery at Whitby :

> In Saxon strength the abbey frown'd,
> With massive arches broad and round,
> That rose alternate, row and row,
> On ponderous columns short and low,
> Built as the art was known,
> By pointed aisle and shafted stack
> The arcades of an alleyed walk
> To emulate in stone.
> Canto II. x., 'The Convent.'

an historical point which need not be referred to now, and those who would like to pursue the subject will find a very good guide in Kemble's 'Saxons in England,' from which I give the two following extracts, suggestive of after-inquiries.

'It is certain that our forefathers depended very materially for subsistence upon the herds of oxen, sheep, and especially swine, which they could feed upon the uninclosed meadows or in the wealds of oak and beech which covered a large proportion of the land. From the moment, in short, when we first learn anything of their domestic condition, all the German tribes appear to be settled upon arable land, surrounded with forest pastures, and having some kind of property in both.'[1]

Such was the old mark, on which many a good old boundary oak was left to stand; a word applied, in after times, to much smaller inclosures, such as commons and town-fields, which where I see needlessly inclosed I am ready to exclaim—so applying the old saw—'Save the mark!' Those who have visited Copenhagen will well remember the marks there, and the grand review days in the time of good old Frederick the Sixth!

But are any of the old marks—not unconnected with the terms, Mercia, Marches, Marchstone, and Marcstones—discoverable now? The second extract from Mr. Kemble's work must answer that question.

'It is more than one could now undertake to do, without much local co-operation, as is not to be expected in England yet, but I am certain that the ancient marks might still be traced. In looking over a good county map, we are surprised by seeing the systematic succession of places ending in *don*, *holt*, *wood*, *hant*, *fald*, and other words which invariably denote forests and outlying pastures in the woods. *These are all in the mark*, and within these we may trace, with equal certainty, the *hams*, *tuns*, *wordigs*, and *stedes*, which imply settled habitations. There are few counties which are not distributed into districts whose limits may be assigned by the observation of these peculiar characteristics. I will lay this down as a rule, that the ancient mark is to be recognised by following

[1] See Book I. c. ii. 'The Mark,' vol. i. 38.

the names of places ending in *den* (neut.), which always denoted *cubile ferarum*, or pasture, usually for swine. *Denu*, a valley (fem.) a British, and not a Saxon, word, is very rarely, perhaps never, found in composition.'[1]

On the etymology of the word—finding that doctors disagree—I had better reserve my opinion, but I may observe that Longe*dune*, or Long*den*, not far from where the Old Oak stood, had its wood capable of fattening sixty swine, as the reader may see in that very valuable book, Eyton's 'Antiquities of Shropshire,' in his account of Longden. In an earlier volume, speaking of Stoddesden, he says that the Saxon terminations *den* and *dun* are often interchanged, though the former indicates a *valley*, and the latter a *hill* or *down*. But if the reader turns to Bosworth's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, as easily accessible, he will find that under the word *Dene*, he is referred to *Denu*, which is explained to be a *plain*, *vale*, *dale*, *valley*. To which he adds, 'It is often used as the termination of the names of places situate in a *plain* or *valley*, as *Tenterden*, &c. To which I may add that in the Anglo-Saxon version of Luke iii. 5, 'every valley' is given in the words *æle denu*. But etymology is a deep limbo, and I may say, in the words of one of Shakespeare's sonnets :

> Why should my heart think that a several plot
> Which my heart knows the wide world's common place?

That is, why should I look upon that as an inclosed field—separate or severed (so the Scripture speaks of Azariah or Uzziah's 'severed house,' which, as a leper, he occupied to the day of his death, 2 Kings xv. 5 ; 2 Chron. xxvi. 21)—which my heart all the while tells me is open as the mark or common field ?

'WAKE, DREAMER, WAKE!'

So said a voice at my elbow as I was penning these lines, and by my side lay the Celtic, Breton, Anglo-Saxon, and Icelandic dictionaries, together with the old Gothic version of the Gospels, for I had been looking into them all, not at all sure whether there was not a clerical error, or a printer's, in the extract from Mr. Kemble's work. So it is, one has

[1] See Book I. ch. ii. 'The Mark,' vol. i. 38.

day dreams as well as the dreams of the night, and time slips away and minutes perish and are imputed!

And I awoke as if from sleep, and to the question put, 'What are the headings of all these chapters for, and all these collected extracts?' I replied, 'The dream about the Old Oak of which I wrote, I am going to commit to paper. I have many cares and troubles in my vocation, and it will tend to ease them. There is nothing like a book, and a pen, and a garden to divert the mind. Bed a rose, prune a tree, dig a trench, or clean a flower border, and it is astonishing what relief it will give to a troubled spirit. It brings a man to himself, and Nature is beautiful always, even if the world is cross-grained, crooked, and awry. Horace had a good notion of this when he thus commenced his epistle to his steward, and you, as a scholar, will anticipate the words:

> Villice silvarum et mihi me reddentis agelli,
> Quem tu fastidis, habitatum quinque focis, et
> Quinque bonos solitum Variam dimittere patres;
> Certemus, spinas animone ego fortius an tu
> Evellas agro; et melior sit Horatius, an res.'

And a kindly voice replied, 'Our county is full of old oaks, and each perhaps has its history—why then tell of another which can convey no particular interest?' To which I answered, 'A few years more, and what pertains to out-of-the-way tradition will be past and gone, and with it much curious history, such as White Kennett preserved in his "Parochial Antiquities," attempted in the history of Ambrosden, Bicester, and other adjacent parts in the counties of Oxford and Bucks. I may venture to say that I have done the same good turn, in a small way, for the parishes of West Tarring, Heene, and Durrington—i.e. *mine*, and my intention is to throw what light I can on the parish where the Old Oak stands, on the adjoining parish of Henwood, on the old county town, and on some county worthies also. Meanwhile, like an old Roman, I will say *Præfiscine!* warding off the evil eye, and all commonplace objections, with the concluding paragraphs of White Kennett's Preface.

"I am sure that there be some who slight and despise this sort of learning, and represent it to be a dry, barren, monkish

study. I leave such to their dear enjoyments of ignorance and ease. But I dare assure any wise and sober man that *historical antiquities*, especially a search into the notices of our own nation, do deserve and will reward the pains of any English student; will make him understand the state of former ages, the constitution of governments, the fundamental sources of equity and law, the rise and succession of doctrines and opinions, the original and ancient, and the composition of modern tongues, the tenure of property, the maxims of policy, the rites of religion, the characters of virtue and vice, and indeed the *nature of mankind*. I wish the excellent parts of many other writers were not spent upon more frivolous arguments, where by subtilties, and cavils, and controverting quibbles, they serve only to weaken Christianity, and, what otherwise were pardonable, to expose one another." '

'Very good and salutary words,' said the same friendly voice, 'and one might think he lived in the time of "Essays and Reviews," with which, as indeed with all sceptical objections, I feel greatly disinclined to become acquainted. For, as a very sensible friend writes me word, so I too think. "I consider," says he, "that the Church, according to my experience, will always be troubled by some form or other of heretical or perverse opinion—and I am old enough to have seen many of these epidemics die away and come to nothing —except in doing mischief to individuals." But, to put aside all such rubbish and perverted learning, if you are determined to let an "Old Shropshire Oak" speak his mind, or rather your own, I dare say you will contrive to bring together curious facts, and to make heavy parts lighter by the introduction of out-of-the-way detail.' To which he added, 'This very morning the grand Old Oak of the homestead was called to my mind by reading a passage in "Gilpin's Forest Scenery," which lay upon the drawing-room table, and in which he speaks of the picturesqueness of high-rooted trees. None indeed could ever pass by the Old Oak you have in your mind's eye without being struck with his gigantic wide-spreading nodulet, arched like those Pliny speaks of in the Hercynian Forest—the first syllable of which you South

Saxons will retain in Hurstmonceaux, Horsebridge, Horsham, Hurst, and all such woods. So at least, I recollect that good man and excellent scholar, Archdeacon Hare, to have said, quite as much in earnest as in joke. What would Max Müller say?'

And I turned to dear old Mr. Gilpin's book, and I recollected how kind he was to Caroline Bowles in her younger days, and how, when I visited the old church at Boldre, the symbol of 'The Fish' for the weathercock struck me forcibly, calling to mind that Holy Name—IXΘΥΣ—of which it and the *Vesica piscis* are an emblem, together with these old words, *Vos pisciculi de aquâ nati,* applied to the newly baptised into Christ.

But I am forgetting William Gilpin's words.

'The rooting idea of trees is a circumstance on which their beauty greatly depends. I know not whether it is reckoned among the maladies of a tree to leave his root above the soil. Old trees often do. But whether it be a malady or not, it is certainly very picturesque. The more they raise the ground around them, and the greater number of radical knobs they heave up, the firmer they seem to establish their footing upon the earth, and the more dignity they assume. An *old tree* rising tamely from a *smooth surface* (as we often find it covered with earth on artificial ground) loses half its effect; it does not appear on the level of the soil, but to be stuck into it, and would have a still worse effect on canvas than it has in nature.' After which words he refers to the passage of Pliny above mentioned. 'Pliny gives us an account of the roots of certain ancient oaks in the Hercynian Forest which appears rather extravagant, but which I can easily conceive to be true. These roots, he says, heave the ground upwards, in many places, into lofty mounts; and in other parts, where the earth does not follow them, the bare roots rise as high as the lower branches; and, twisting round, form, in many places, portals so wide that a man and horse may ride upright through them: much more indeed, according to the original, which has "*ut turmas equitum* transmittant" —i.e. *troops* of horse. I may add in passing that anyone who can turn to Hunter's edition of Evelyn's "Sylva" may see

a horseman passing under, not the roots, but the bole of the Green Dale Oak, near Welbeck. It is calculated that 225 beasts might stand under its branches.'

And thus a pleasant interview and our pleasant conversation ended, and then there came the parting. A volume of St. Jerome's works was lying on the study table, and oddly enough, I lighted on the words which follow: 'Tamen longo a me spatio sejunctus, non minus mihi dereliquit abeundo desiderium, quam attulerit veniendo lætitiam.' Certainly it was something like a pleasant 'Sors Virgiliana'; and the more I thought of the Old Oak of the old Shropshire homestead, the more vividly 'the dream' seemed to develop itself before my waking eyes, and chapter after chapter mentally took form and shape, and I repeated to myself poor Keats's words:

> Yet it was but a dream; yet such a dream
> That never tongue, although it overteem
> With mellow utterance like a cavern spring,
> Could figure out, and to conception bring
> All I beheld and felt.

CHAPTER II.

THE AGE OF THE OLD SHROPSHIRE OAK.

Prætextaque quercu
Stat domus.
OVID, *Fast.* iv. 953.

His head was silvered o'er with age,
And long experience made him sage.
GAY'S FABLES, *Shepherd and Philosopher.*

The seeds of herbs and plants at the first are not in act, but in possibility, that which they afterwards grow to be.—HOOKER, *Eccl. Pol.*, Book V. lii. § 3.

The longest life is but a little short parenthesis in the broad page of time, which is itself a mere preface or prologue to eternity.—MRS. PIOZZI'S *Autobiography*, ii. 267.

Let all men know
That tree shall long time keep a steady foot,
Whose branches spread no wider than the root.
WEBSTER'S *Vittoria Corombona*, i. 124, Ed. Dyce.

IN the foregoing chapter I alluded to 'the dream,' and wrote down the exact words of it. In the chapters which are to follow—time and health and the gracious use of the understanding and mental faculties permitting — the dream is supposed to be more or less continuous, night after night, during the period I was enabled to stay in the neighbourhood of the patronising good old oak—the 'Talking Oak,' I must venture to call him with Tennyson; for whatever deductions I may make from his remarks, and whatever matters or quotations of varied date I may venture to interweave, the time-honoured old tree is supposed to enter into the dialogue and to utter his antiquated say.

Tho' what he whispered under Heaven
None else could understand;
I found him garrulously given,
A babbler in the land.

Gentle reader! make allowances for the fiction, if such it

may be called, for you and I, if we face our everyday duties, have enough of hard realities to contend with. Meanwhile, all good wishes, and an oaken shade, if it may be; to use the old poet's words, in those his equally venerable Fasti:

Protegat et vestras querna corona fores!

And I had wandered about till I was weary, and the day was past and gone, and the great kindness of home friends, and the bells of the old church, and the babbling of the brook hard by, and the cawing of the rooks, and the sound of the weir, and the baying of Oscar, the old deerhound—in a word, each several sound, soft and pleasant, together with a mind at rest, counselled sleep, and the sleep was sweet as a child's. Towards the short hours, however, of the morning—

Post mediam noctem . . . cum somnia vera,

as the Satirist speaks, methought I heard the rustling of leaves. Clear it was to me that my attention was bespoken, and with a turn in my bed and a long drawn-out yawn I had sense enough to perceive that the Old Oak was addressing me, neither was there anything grisled or crabbed in the words he seemed to speak, but a tremulousness only at the first, such as was not inappropriate to his years and long standing.

Words of the Old Oak.

'The acorn from which I sprang was dropped in a heavy storm, as the time-honoured oak, my father, told me, about the beginning of the reign of Edward I.—by the almanack (for I am advancing in years and am obliged to refer to it) Nov. 20, 1272. God rest his poor wife Eleanor, to whose memory, according to his will, these crosses were erected. Nothing speeds but under the Cross.

'He—the oak, my father—was himself a very old tree, older than I am now, although not very careful of his constitution, for he had settled in a damp spot on the other side where the road is now; and, though I say it (who greatly respect his memory, for he was a tree of infinite humour and strong good common sense), he was fond of drinking, too much so for his health, as has been the case with great statesmen

even, and the magnates of the land. The consequence was that he did not reach more than 700 or 750. He often said, at least when recounting to me his earlier life, that he was about 360 years old when the Norman came in, and he added that when he was an oakling all the neighbourhood still talked of good Bishop Chad of Lichfield's death, for a good man all agreed he was, even if sometimes weak, and, it may be, something of a fanatic. Humbly though he thought of himself, other people who loved his meekness thought him the right man in the right place.

'You, of the nineteenth century, who are more book-learned than men or trees of old time (recollect in all your pride and vanity that you are indebted to the bark of trees for many an early book), may be thankful for much traditional lore that has been handed down to you by observant bodies like my old father, whose site, as I said, was that of the little runlet over the way. And so, because he was older when he fell than I am now, his *traditional knowledge* will cover a much longer period of years; and many were the tales he used to tell not only of the Saxons and the Cymry, but of the Druids too, now only to be found in old books which scholars read and pore over.

'And then, besides, he had a wonderful store of small facts treasured up in his deep-grooved *mental* bark work.' (I couldn't help again thinking of Tennyson's 'Talking Oak,' the very age seemed apposite:

> I swear, by leaf, and wind, and rain,
> (And hear me with thine ears),
> That, though I circle in the grain
> *Five hundred* rings of years,—

yet is my information correct.) 'Such as, for example, *data* like these, which I heard the priest of Hanwood say to the priest of Pontesbury, his old friend, were all noted down in that mixed and garbled book, the "Saxon Chronicle":—

'A.D. 671. This year was the great destruction among the birds.' Such, perhaps, as occurs every now and then from severe frosts, or, amongst the grove tribe particularly, from the tape-worm; but of this special instance I find no other record.

'A.D. 678. This year the star (called) a comet appeared in August, and shone like a sunbeam every morning for three months.' Much noted were such signs in the heavens by the venerable Oak, as will presently be seen from other references.

'A.D. 688. This year Ina succeeded to the kingdom of the West Saxons, and held it thirty-seven years, and he built the minster at Glastonbury;' a name which he said was of recent introduction, for the ancient Britons called it Avalon, from its apples, and the Cymry *Ynys-wytryn*, or the glassy island, of which Glaston-ey and Glaston-a-byrig are but Saxon forms. 'Marvellous things had my father heard of Glastonbury, and he told of the scorn of the Druids when they heard it called "the fountain head of all religion in Britain," and how they sneered at the name of Joseph of Arimathæa, and of the thorns which people cracked about; and he had heard people throw dirt on the name of King Arthur and his Round Table, for which he hoped they would be forgiven, declaring pithily enough that "he who had never existed and was but a fable could not have been buried in the Isle of Avalon." This and a great deal more did he say of Glastonbury, as possibly may be noticed by-and-by, for I was not an oakling likely to forget either Edwy or Dunstan, or the strange recitals and confessions made at the "George" as the pilgrims were on their way to his shrine. I will only add here that the earthquake which destroyed church and monastery, leaving only the tower of St. Michael, occurred in A.D. 1276, four years after I was an acorn.

'These other notices—sleepy influences you may call them—my venerable father alluded to frequently, and perhaps he thought, as modern *savants* are said to do, that sun and moon and planets, and planetary signs, and tides even, had a subtle influence on his growth. Somewhat superstitious he seemed to me on this head.

'A.D. 729. This year the star (called) a comet appeared, and Saint Egbert died in Iona.

'A.D. 734. This year the moon was as if it had been sprinkled with blood, and Archbishop Tatwin and Bede died, and Egbert was consecrated bishop.

'A.D. 773. This year a crucifix appeared in the heavens

after sunset, and the same year the Mercians and the Kentish men fought at Oxford, and wondrous adders were seen in the land of the South Saxons.

'A.D. 793. This year dire forewarnings came over the land of the North-humbrians and miserably terrified the people; there were excessive whirlwinds and lightnings, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the air. A great famine soon followed these tokens; and a little after that, in the same year, on the 6th before the Ides of January, the ravaging of heathen men lamentably destroyed God's church at Lindisfarne through rapine and slaughter.

'A.D. 806. This year the moon was eclipsed on the Kalends of September, and Eardulf, King of the North-humbrians, was driven from his kingdom; and Embert, Bishop of Hexham, died. Also, in the same year, on the 2nd before the Nones of June, a cross appeared in the moon on a Wednesday at dawn, and afterwards in this year, on the 3rd before the Kalends of September, a wonderful circle was seen about the sun.

'All these matters the old oak, my father, noticed.'

Whereupon there was a pause. And I considered that I had read more or less of what the rustling tree declared so oracularly in the 'Saxon Chronicle,' and turning to it I made the extracts as above, and it was considerable (as our forefathers used to speak) how accurate the old tree was in his details, perhaps as accurate as that Chronicle which has exercised, and will yet exercise, many clever heads; so that the Old Oak might say on points of difference:

> I may be straight, though they themselves be bevel.

It was observed that the Old Oak spake of his father as well remembering what was said of Bishop Chad of Lichfield; and when we come to speak of his locality, it will appear not at all unnatural, Shrewsbury, near which the Old Oak dwelt, being at no very great distance from that venerable city. No name, in fact, was more familiar in Shropshire than that of Chad, whose church in Shrewsbury was built where, in 617, stood the palace which was the residence of Brockwel Ysgithrog, Prince of Powis and Chester, and which had also

been the habitation of a long race of British princes, but was burnt down during the wars between the Britons and the Saxons. Who, indeed, has not heard of Ceadda? who has not heard tell of his lowly humility and of his exemplary charity? of his cell, and of the white doe whose milk sustained him in Lichfield's suburbs till he was consecrated Bishop of his See? of his conversion of Wolphen, King of Mercia, and of his gratitude in placing him in the See which Oswy had founded? Or, again, what reader of dear old Jeremy Taylor, in early days, did not draw in his breath when he read such a passage as this—far from putting it down for a superstitious vanity: 'Of this, God is so careful, and yet so kind and provident, that fear might not be produced always at the expense of a great suffering, that He hath provided for us certain prologues of judgment, and keeps us waking with alarms, that so He might reconcile His mercies with our duties. Of this nature are epidemical diseases not yet arrived at us, prodigious tempests, thunder and loud noises from heaven; and he that will not fear when God speaks so loud, is not yet made soft with the impresses and perpetual droppings of religion. Venerable Bede reports of St. Chad, that if a great gust of wind suddenly arose, he presently made some holy ejaculation to beg favour of God for all mankind who might possibly be concerned in the effects of that wind; but if a storm succeeded, he fell prostrate to the earth, and grew as violent in prayer as the storm was, either at land or sea. But if God added thunder and lightning, he went to the church, and there spent all his time, during the tempest, in reciting litanies, psalms, and other holy prayers, till it pleased God to restore His favour and to seem to forget His anger. And the good bishop added this reason: because these are the extensions and stretchings forth of God's hand, and yet He did not strike; but he that trembles not when he sees God's arm held forth to strike us, understands neither God's mercies nor his own danger; he neither knows what those horrors were which the people saw from Mount Sinai, nor what the glories and amazement shall be at the great day of judgment.' Striking words indeed!

Good old man, whose weakness battled well with the

strong, stalwart, uncouth world about him! I would rather have had his weakness than a giant's strength! Good old man, that trudged on foot throughout his diocese of York—considerate Theodore, who would not have him do it again at Lichfield, that field of the dead (we still retain the term *lich* or corpse gate, and *lich* path), as it was called from the traditionary martyrdom of a thousand Christians there in the days of Diocletian, and of which 'the Christian Field' there still retains the memorial. What such holy men as Chad did in his day we can but faintly guess now; but Wordsworth, in his sonnet on the primitive Saxon clergy, has left us no mean portrait of their usefulness:

> How beautiful your presence, how benign,
> Servants of God! who not a thought will share
> With the vain world; who, outwardly as bare
> As winter trees, yield no fallacious sign
> That the firm soul is clothed with fruit divine!
> Such priest, when service worthy of his care
> Has called him forth to breathe the common air,
> Might seem a saintly image from its shrine
> Descended:—happy are the eyes that meet
> The apparition; evil thoughts are stayed
> At his approach, and low-bowed necks entreat
> A benediction from his voice and hand;
> Whence grace, through which the heart can understand,
> And vows, that bind the wise, in silence made.

I cannot wonder that the Old Oak heard so much talk of Bishop Chad!

'Amongst other things the old oak, my father, used to speak of the coming in of the Saxons. I am not sure, as far as my memory serves me, that he was opposed to their entrance into the realm, for he seemed to think it was one step forward towards civilisation. This, however, with him, was but traditional knowledge. It was with the Norman Conquest that he had more to do, as will be shown in its proper place. His general idea was, that one horde would bring in another—in the words of your favourite national poet'—(there was an audible sound in his topmost branches, something like a pleasant burst of laughter, as the Old Oak said he was well acquainted with all our poets, and should often have occasion to quote their words):

> 'These water-galls in her dim element
> Foretell new storms to those already spent.

'But, notwithstanding that he patiently submitted to the arrival of the several hordes which now make up the British name and nation, my father was a great lover of his country —heart of oak every inch of him—and every distress that befell it moved him to his inmost circle. Times there were too when he would expatiate upon that greatness which he foresaw she would accomplish. Indeed, he was a very long-sighted old gentleman, and much which I have seen in my days he anticipated in his. And he used to add, "Perhaps the axe will not deal so ruthlessly with our trunks when trade and shipping shall bring in virgin timber from yet unknown nations."'

And there was again a pause, and I called to mind the lines of Milman's 'Samor, Lord of the Bright City,' that early poem of great promise—

> Britain is like her soil; above the turf
> Lies velvet smooth, hard iron lurks beneath.

Camden's description of our isle, in after times, would have suited his treeship vastly. 'The air is most temperate and wholesome, sited in the midst of the temperate zone, subject to no storms and tempests as the more southern and northern are, but stored with infinite and delicate food. For water, it is walled and guarded with the ocean, most commodious for traffick to all parts of the world, and watered with pleasant, fishful, and navigable rivers, which yield safe havens and roads, and furnished with shipping and sailors, that it may rightly be termed "The Lady of the Sea."'

And methinks she may remain so still, if only true to herself, notwithstanding all the iron-coated and cupola vessels of the world. It is almost enough, however, to make old Wilkinson get up and walk for delight to find his prophecy so soon fulfilled about iron vessels and iron houses. Perhaps, nevertheless, it would have disturbed the Old Oak to have seen an iron vessel plying to serve him, as it did in 1790, up and down the Severn! so he might have exclaimed, in no pleasant mood:

> But now experience purchased with grief,
> Has made me see the difference of things;

or have anticipated those words of Tennyson in 'The Talking Oak,' by the irate creaking of his time-honoured boughs:

> I swear (and else may insects prick
> Each leaf into a gall).

And as I looked up into the gnarled branches of my old friend, I bethought me of those old lines of Henry Vaughan, the Silurist, which evidently riveted the attention of the author of the 'Horæ Subsecivæ,' a work of very great interest:

> I saw eternity the other night
> Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
> All calm as it was bright;
> And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years,
> Driven by the spheres,
> Like a vast shadow moved, in which the world,
> And all her train, were hurled!

Sober thoughts like these are at all events good for Christians as they advance in age, and they not unnaturally influence the mind in dwelling on the age of the Old Shropshire Oak. There is, at least, a time for all things, and it is wise to seize hold on all times which lead on to heavenly wisdom. For, constituted as we are at present, the body, with its every-day varying conditions, with the fumes of its laboratories, with its appetites and its ills, sways the mental being; and it is only at intervals that the mind fully asserts its proper supremacy.

And very few things are there which, when carefully investigated, will not read us a lesson. For example:

> Here is a shell: 't is pearly blank to me,
> Nor marked with any sign or charactery.

So says Endymion. And yet to a connoisseur the wrinkles would have told the age, or something very near approaching to it. In the same way, by a transverse section, if not the age, yet testimony to the Old Oak's very great antiquity might have been arrived at also. And we! How many tokens do

we all bear about us of advancing age and of receding years? Saith not the old proverb, 'Grey hairs are thy passing bell'? Yet who regardeth? What could the prophet say more of Israel's negligence than this: 'Grey hairs are here and there upon him, and yet he knoweth it not'? Venerable old tree, I thank thee much for solemn thoughts, holy meditations, and a timely warning. Ask now of the trees of the wood that rejoice before the Lord, and they shall teach thee, O Christian man!

It was Channing's constant remark, 'Noble growths are slow'; and any one would re-echo the sentiment who might have stood before this grand old tree. And hence arose those views expressed by Spence on the American Union: 'The growth of the poplar is rapid when compared with the growth of the oak, but we know that its value is proportionally small. There is always a ratio between growth and durability, and a law exists that whatever grows with great rapidity will rapidly decay. There is also a natural rate of growth, and one that may be stimulated, and all experience teaches us that the natural rate will prove the better in the end.' So is it with precocious talent. It is a very rare thing for infant prodigies to turn out anything wonderful in advanced age. The vigour, which should have been lasting, was prematurely spent.

> Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
> And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
> Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
> And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
> And every fair from fair sometime declines,
> By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd.

In former days, and in ancient times, Shropshire was notably famous for its oaks—surpassing in size, though not in value of timber, the oak of the South Saxons. Many even yet remain, and tell a tale to wondering bystanders. Districts, even, such as 'The Oaks,' were called from the prevailing growth; but wars and bloodshed, to say nothing of the rise of architecture, have thinned their ranks, and monarchs of the forest are now few and far between.

Meanwhile, as I was meditating on the fine old tree

before me, I bethought me of what he had said of his father's thirsty habits, by which all that he meant to imply was that his roots were too close to a little runlet, runnel, or rundel—that is to say, a little tiny rivulet, scarcely broader than a common ditch. Hundreds of times during boyhood's days I had leapt over it, sometimes leapt into it.

And I crossed the old road—the Pontesbury, Minsterley or Montgomery road—to survey the site of the Old Oak's father once more. Even then, though the small watercourse trickled runnel-wise as in earlier years through the turf of what used to be called the 'Boosy Pasture,' much poached with the feet of cattle in the autumn and winter months, there were signs of great change and mutability. The old white thorns, with their peculiar trunks, gnarled and twisted by every wind under heaven, were gone. A grand old crab tree, from whose fruit good housewives had made verjuice (locally called *verjus*) from time immemorial, was no more, and there was no more chance of illustrating the old proverb on the spot, 'Hang a dog upon a crab tree, and he'll never love verjuice.' Some old pollard willows, off which children had gathered palms on Palm Sunday for a century or more, had yielded to the infirmities of age, and it was useless for the village children, in their happy hours, to seek for 'gullies' there—so called, no doubt, from their similarity in colour to goslings. Last, and not least, the stump of an old oak was missing, which must have been one of great antiquity, though when I mentioned it to my friend, the Old Talking Shropshire Oak, he shrugged his bark and pooh-poohed the notion, adding these words, or words like these: 'If the old oak, my father, could not stand the heavy wet of the runlet, is it likely that an oak of weaker growth should? Few children, take my word for it, come up to their fathers; mostly they degenerate; few and far between are they who surpass the virtues of their sires!'

Grand oracular old oak—Homer and Horace said this before. It was rude of Donatus (some parties would say he was not 'rude donatus,' not privileged to make the remark), 'Pereant qui ante nos nostra dixerunt!' And I hummed to myself the lines of the old 'blind Melesigenes—hence Homer

called '—capping them mentally, in old Etonian phrase, with those of Horace:

Παῦροι γάρ τοι παῖδες ὁμοῖοι πατρὶ πέλονται·
Οἱ πλέονες κακίους, παῦροι δέ τε πατρὸς ἀρείους.

Damnosa quid non imminuit dies?
Ætas parentum, pejor avis, tulit
Nos nequiores, mox daturos
Progeniem vitiosiorem.

Happily for ourselves, and for civilisation generally, this only applies to heroic ages and heroic stature, and to the bones of primitive giants. Morally and religiously, though there is plenty of room to mend, we hope and trust there is much improvement.

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD SHROPSHIRE OAK'S LOCALITY.

O flourish, hidden deep in fern,
Old oak, I love thee well;
A thousand thanks for what I learn
And what remains to tell.

TENNYSON, *The Talking Oak.*

Hic ubi nunc Roma est orbis caput, arbor et herbæ,
Et paucæ pecudes, et casa rara fuit.

OVID, *Fast.* v. 93.

The contemplation of nature should always be seasoned with a mixture of devotion, the highest faculty of the human mind; by which alone contemplation is improved and dignified, and directed to its proper object.—JONES OF NAYLAND, *Religious Use of Botanical Philosophy*, iv. 2.

In these deep solitudes and awful cells,
Where heav'nly-pensive Contemplation dwells.

POPE.

WHAT nowadays is a highly cultivated spot, with the rail close by, was, in the days of the present Old Oak's father, thick-wooded and what might be called forest land, with occasional clearings, however, such as the traveller lighted on in Norway and Sweden five-and-thirty and forty years ago, and might have been illustrated, some sixty years past, by the intakes of the New Forest. In fact, the Old Oak's locality was something like 'The Bush,' with a way through it—not a king's or a queen's highway, as ways are now—but one similar to those through which the Kafirs wound their bodies like serpents in the last Cape War, which one would wish to be the last!

Thinly populated as England was in those days, it was not a locality in which there was much coming and going—the reverse, of course. Still the district, as a district, was not an unfrequented one. It was the way taken by the Cymry,

or the ancient Britons, when they journeyed from the district which afterwards took the name of its chief town, Trê Baldwyn, or Montgomery, by way of the mines at Shelve (the ancient Silva), the Stiperstonn and Pontesford, to the ancient Penquerne—better known in after days by the name of Shrewsbury.

But, in the Old Oak's days, the people more immediately round about the locality were Saxons, or, more properly, Anglo-Saxons, those sometime dwellers in the south of Sleswig and Holstein, when the Angles were next-door neighbours to the Saxons. 'Once,' as I whispered to the leaves of my old friend, the more modern Oak, 'between thirty and forty years ago, I was present at a marriage feast and dance at Neumünster—the very

Gentis cunabula nostræ.

At no great distance from where the Old Oak stood—some half or three-quarters of a mile—close by the Cruckton Meadows, the Hanwood Quarters, and a field called the Bowels, is a well-known mound, thought generally to have been heaped over old warriors,

In some forgotten battle slain.

But probably it was the site of the *Mearcmót*, the place where the *Mark-mót*, or court, was held. For, as that excellent Saxon antiquary, Mr. Kemble, observes, 'The *Mearcbeorh*, which,' in old documents, 'is not at all of rare occurrence, appears to denote the hill or mound which was the site of the court, and the place where the free settlers met at stated periods to do right between man and man.'

Upon putting the inquiry to the Old Oak, wishing to know if his venerable father had ever dropped any hints upon the subject, there was a rustling and a shaking of his leaves (like 'the sound in the tops of the mulberry trees' in the valley of Rephaim), but no information. And I concluded it might be so or it might not; but if it ever was the place of the *mót* (the *mót-hall* still retains its name in an adjoining district), it was a pretty place for the seat of justice, and the wood-pigeons love it yet, the only sounds heard there now being the

cushat's cooing in the tops of the time-honoured Scotch firs —some eighty or ninety years old—albeit

> There is a roaring in the thick green pines,
> When Winter lifts his voice.

Throughout the nation there are numbers of barrows which have been searched into by antiquaries devoted to mound-burial. Snorro Sturluson, in his preface to the 'Heimskringla,' records that 'after Frey was interred under a mound at Upsala—this was Gamla Upsala, that is the Old Halls, about two miles from the modern city—many chiefs raised sepulchral barrows, but the age of mound-burial commenced with 'Dani can Mikillati Dana Konungi,' rendered in the Danish by 'Dan den höimodige, de Danskir Konge,' or, as we should say, Mikillati the Magnificent. Burning, however, was yet common enough, as the contents of many a barrow attest, and it is not easy to say when cremation ceased and burial began. There was evidently a period when the hero himself was interred, and his accompaniments (very various) committed to the flames. This, however, was not the case with Beowulf, whose adventures are recorded in the poem so named. He was burnt, and a barrow was raised over him, high and broad, to be seen by sailors far off at sea, like the tomb of Achilles. Take the words of the grand old bard, and the gentle Cowper's translation:

> Ἀμφ' αὐτοῖσι δ' ἔπειτα μέγαν καὶ ἀμύμονα τύμβον
> χεύαμεν Ἀργείων ἱερὸς στρατὸς αἰχμητάων,
> ἀκτῇ ἔπι προὐχούσῃ, ἐπὶ πλατεῖ Ἑλλησπόντῳ·
> ὥς κεν τηλεφανὴς ἐκ ποντόφιν ἀνδράσιν εἴη
> τοῖς, οἳ νῦν γεγάασι, καὶ οἳ μετόπισθεν ἔσονται.
>
> Around both urns we piled a noble tomb,
> We warriors of the sacred Argive host,
> On a tall promontory, shooting far
> Into the spacious Hellespont, that all
> Who live, and who shall yet be born, may scan
> Thy record, even from the distant waves.

The reader who may feel interested on this question of cremation and the burial of the body entire may refer to what is said in 'The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon,' on the Anglo-Saxon barrows. Mr. Wright's view is that cremation

was the 'predominating practice among the Angles, from Norfolk into the centre of Mercia,' and that the poem of Beowulf was derived from the Angles, and described 'the burning of the dead as it existed among them.' But within a while, I have little doubt that the burial of the body became general, and the mound of earth was raised over the remains. 'This mound,' says the author just quoted, 'was termed *hlæw*, a hillock, the modern word, *low*, which is still used in Derbyshire, and *beorh*, *beorg*, or *bearw*, a word having the same signification, from which is derived our modern name of *barrow*. In Sussex they are still called *burghs*'; *burg* also, I suppose to signify, in that county, *hill* and *hillock*. Burg-hill is an evident compound of the two.

But all of this is a digression, and it must remain in doubt for ever whether or no the 'mound' in the Old Shropshire Oak's locality was a *mearcbeorh*, or simply a barrow raised over the dead—an old local name for which mounds in Shropshire and in Herefordshire was *tamps*, not improbably a simple corruption of *tumulus*.

'From the upper boughs as well of my old father as of myself, before they made me stag-headed,' said the venerable tree, 'you could always on a clear day see the Stiperstones, *afforested* in after times, like other such either mountainous or sterile districts, of which, in our old county, we have many—for example, Morf and Wyre, Shirlot, the Clee, the Wrekin, and the Long Forest. But, though unavailable for agriculture, they had their uses. The thicket supplied game of all sorts for food, and in the winter there was no lack of firewood. Even now, from my six old branches—

> It is a sore consumed tree
> That on it bears not one fresh bough,—

I delight to look upon the undulations of that noble old forest as I listen to the music of our little brook as it babbles over the stones.'

The name of the little stream here adverted to by the Old Oak was 'The Rea,' a common name for a brook, as will be seen hereafter, and into this the little runnel or runlet trickled which has been mentioned before.

Ordinarily, wherever a stream ran through the flats, there would at all times, even when agriculture was little thought of, be some sort of cultivation, and so it was on 'The Rea'; but, comparatively speaking, it was little, and the fish of the stream and the game of the wood was enough.

> Durum ab stirpe genus, natos ad flumina primum
> Deferimus, saevoque gelu duramus et undis;
> Venatu invigilant pueri, silvasque fatigant.

In course of time, however, matters mended, and arable land increased, together with forest pasturage. In some parts this was so to a considerable extent, though not so in the Old Oak's locality. 'It is well known,' remarks Mr. Kemble, 'that great quantities of land were thrown out of cultivation to produce chases and forests. And the constant wars of the baronial ages must have had the same effect. However singular we may think it, we can hardly avoid the conclusion that, in *some* districts of England, the Saxon may have had more land in cultivation than we ourselves had at the beginning of George the Third's reign. Mr. Porter calculates that from 1760 to 1844, no less than 7,076,610 acres have been brought into cultivation under Inclosure Bills.' This is certainly a matter for congratulation when we look to the increase of our people.

But it would be a matter of no little surprise to uneducated persons—I may say, to many who are ranked with the educated—to find themselves set down on what was the locality of our Old Oak even in his early days, to say nothing of the days of his *thirsty* father. My impression is that a very few meadows by the Cruckton brook and the Rea constituted the whole of the open ground, it being more easy to dislodge the alders and the withies than those of firmer root. In the days of the present Oak's father, no doubt, the forest came down pretty nearly to the lowlands and the brooklands (such as would be called in Sussex, 'wishes,' etymologically the same as 'The Wash'; Shropshire people even yet speak of 'washing'), and what they designated as arable land, *pro frumentario*, as still expressed in old documents (West Grinstead, in Sussex, had a certain portion of the parish of

Lancing assigned to it *pro frumentario*), I have no doubt, had a great proportion of skrab and *shin* ; in fact, in the present day, it would hardly have been called arable land at all. Such is the difference of times—of agricultural and of national progress. Happy for us that it is so, or we might have been starving in our sea-girt isle !

Still, as we have seen, the Old Oak's locality had its portion of cultivated soil, and, in Saxon times, no doubt, it went under the usual name. We pick up from German and Anglo-Saxon muniments that this name was mark or mearc, and that in the first instance it was held in common. Hence the *mearcmót* above referred to, and the old name of the marches. Afterwards it was more defined or marked—whence, probably, the general use of the term—and then each mark-man's separate and private estate was his allodium, or alod, a term which shows that it was not feudal or beneficiary ; in other words, 'it was held without any burden or vassalage, or without a superior.' Hariot, heriot, or heregate, was a term of later date, about which the learned disagree, and will do so, as far as I can make out, till the end of time. Under any circumstances it would have been but a sorry beast or chattel which the lord of the manor (or the mearc, in its widest acceptation), would have picked up in the Old Oak's locality ; neither would it have been surrendered freely.

I am not of the number of those who think we can pick up any clear information as to the divisions of land in old Anglo-Saxon days from the well-known chapter of Tacitus' 'Germania.' Indeed, I am inclined to acquiesce in Dr. Latham's observation in his notes : 'The proper commentator upon this difficult section is some conveyancer learned in ethnology, rather than a simple ethnologist.' And so the matter must be left, only adding that *periodical transfers* and *permanent appropriation* are evidently alluded to in the passage of the historian. In all probability Tacitus himself could have come to no definite conclusion about it.

I can easily conceive that in wintry weather, and in any times of storm and tempest long impending, and before it burst upon the vale of the Rea with a fortnight, three weeks, or a month's deluge, all around the Old Oak's locality must

have been most dreary and desolate. A canny Scot might have spoken of it almost in the words of the old ballad of Otterbourne :

> The deer runs wild in hill and dale,
> The birds fly wild from tree to tree ;
> But there is neither bread nor kale
> To feed my men and me !

In dark days of equinoctial pressure, when the four winds of heaven wrought in turn and were tempestuous, every now and then there was a watery flash of sunshine, which showed the weather side of Pontesford Hill—the 'great resort,' my venerable father used to say, 'of the fox when pressed, and of the uneven-legged badger, of which in those days there were plenty.' And as I looked up the valley when I awoke, now obscured by smoke of coal-works and poisonous gases from the tall lead chimneys, I said to myself, 'It must indeed have been what the South Saxon would have called an *ellenge* spot.' So it impressed me as a boy. Weird was it and desolate ; shattered and shivered crags had rolled down from the hillside, and had covered the ground to a great distance, advancing in their downward course so far sometimes as to hinder the current of the small stream which ran beneath. As for the rock face itself, it was diversified only by an aged thorn or two springing up where one would have thought that nothing could have found soil to live on. Now and then, before the winter torrents displaced them, the boulders below took such shapes and orderly disorder as poets dream of.

> Like a dismal cirque
> Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor
> When the chill rain begins at shut of eve
> In dull November, and their chancel vault,
> The heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.

'There was an old oak, a great friend of my father's,' said my talking chronicler, 'who lived at a place called Sibert's Cot' (living in the south of England, I called to mind Sibert's Wold Down, some half-way between Canterbury and Deal), 'but a farm now, as you know well. Those who wanted to go to the weather side of Pontesford Hill had a sort of path

through the Bush (as we call it), and wormed their way in this direction. But on each side of Sibert's Cot there was a great breadth of low ground, and on one side a deep bog, in which many a noble animal was lost, to the great damage of the Saxon's larder. It was a great resort for herons and bitterns —abundant then, however scarce now. These, occasionally, came down to our locality, fishing in the Rea and the Cruckton Bend. On one of these visits, two herons reported that the old Sibert's Cot oak was in a poorish way, which my father was very sorry to hear, for he was a kind and friendly oak; and they held a consultation in the midst of his branches about establishing a fresh heronry. I perfectly recollect my venerable father's saying (he very well knew a hawk from a handsaw, which, being interpreted, is a heron or a heronshaw), "he hoped they would never establish a heronry close to him, for though a bold, he was not a clean, bird, and he did not wish to have a heron's long legs dangling amongst his bright leaves." To which he added, "he could put up with a magpie, for, although mischievous, he was clean and clever, and was one of the very few English birds that ever thought of putting a cover to his nest." The last that I seem to have heard of my father's old friend, the oak of Sibert's Cot, was, that he became *low in the world*—the upper portion of his trunk was broken off, and all that remained was from six and a half to seven feet. In the lower part of the bole, odd as it may seem, a sly old fox took up his periodical habitation, from which he was not disturbed by the constant abode of two white owls, who had literally filled one half or more of the remaining trunk with their pellets. Between them and Reynard there was but a very slender division of very rotten wood.[1] The consultation of the two herons came to nothing—no heronry, at least, was established in the old oak's locality. They settled themselves on the Vyrnwy, not far from Llanymynach,' rustled my talking friend; and I called to mind that one of the last heronries in Shropshire was in the lofty woods of Linley, the seat of Robert More, Esq., who kept it up till his death in 1780.

[1] This is a literal fact. When I was a boy an old oak stood a field or two from Sibert's Cot, and my father told me the anecdote.

Upon another occasion I recollect the Old Oak speaking of a visit of some herons. They had fled, without drawing pinion, from *Vectis*, the Roman ferry called the Old Passage, at the junction of the Severn and the Wye, in Gloucestershire. As they rested on his venerable father's branches, they kept talking of Austcliffe, and St. Augustine's oak there; rather, he thought, a disparagement of the rest, and shelter, and shade, he so readily afforded them. He added, 'They must have come out for a wake or a holiday, for they did nothing but fish the brooks, and chatter and talk.' Some have doubted the site of St. Augustine's oak, and questioned whether any particular oak at all was alluded to. I give Bede's words, and leave them to the consideration of scholars: 'Interea Augustinus adjutorio usus Ædilberti regis, convocavit ad suum colloquium episcopos sive doctores proximæ Britonum provinciæ, in loco qui usque hodie lingua Anglorum AUGUSTINÆS AC, id est, robur Augustini, in confinio Hareciorum et Occidentalium Saxonum appellatur.' Honest old Fuller, having made his remarks upon this *Synodus Vigorniensis*—so called because standing on the confines of Worcester and Herefordshire—sums up in the words which follow: 'But when all is done, the matter is not so clear but that the place called Augustine's Oak may as well be a town as a tree, so called from some eminent oak in, at, or near, it: as The Vine, in Hampshire—so named from vines anciently growing there—is a beautiful house and principal seat, where the Barons Sandys have their habitation. And what is most apposite for our purpose, Sozomen calleth the place where Theophilact kept a synod against St. Chrysostom, The Oak, which, notwithstanding, is notoriously known to have been a populous suburb of the city of Chalcedon.'

There was yet another spot, hard by the Old Oak's locality, from which the view was unsurpassable for beauty, specially in the autumn and summer months, and about the time when the sun knows his going down. Look upon those Welsh hills from what was, in my childhood, called 'The Great Pool,' a sheet of water at the head of a high field; look to the Breidden, the Moel-y-golfa, with one side ragged as the head of Œdipus; and to the Middletown Hill, as it has been

called in modern days, and, as the excellent lady of the manor said, 'The upturned eye beholds, in faith, the God of heaven.' At eventide, when all was still and hushed, she loved to be rowed upon that Great Pool, and with her children around her, to call down a blessing upon their heads. In my time, I have seen many lovely spots in many lands, but, to use the feeling expression of Goldsmith, 'the heart untravelled' has always returned to this. I cannot think of that spot without at all times calling to my mind those words of the Psalmist, 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: yea, if I prefer not Jerusalem in my mirth.'

Then again, at sunrise, he that was there betimes had no mean prospect before him, specially in the summer months. All nature, bathed in dew from the womb of the morning, seemed fresh as infancy. The woods on every side glistened with the rising light, the hares had left their covert with feet like wool and ears pricked to catch every sound, the partridge was calling, the quails (I remember plenty) were whistling, the dipper on the water only just left a ripple as he dived about the size of a trout's rise, there was the small feeble cark of the water-hen, and the swallows were skimming over the Pool, having given notice to a *late*[1] bat to go to bed again, and lie by till it was time for his evening amusement, perhaps not altogether pleased to see a bat dip like themselves (which they do), or *put out*, possibly, by the undue quantity of early insects they saw him swallow on the wing. I can call to mind few prettier sights for a diligent observer of Nature.

> Lo! here the gentle lark, weary of rest,
> From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
> And wakes the morning, from whose silver breast,
> The sun ariseth in his majesty;
> Who doth the world so gloriously behold,
> That cedar tops and hills look burnished gold!

[1] On Tuesday, April 29, 1862, Mr. Constade and myself saw a bat busy at midday by the Swanbourne Lake, Arundel. He was feeding on clouds of midges under a dark tree, unless I am mistaken.

All things considered, the Old Oak's locality was no mean one. A pleasant one was the place of his habitation, and his outstretched boughs rejoiced as each took their turn according to the ordinance of breadth, in the rains that watered them, in the sunshine that cherished them, and in the winds that cleansed them. What a blessed thing is the light of the sun in its strength—

> Which showers down glory on the simplest things !

'My venerable father,' said the Oak, my talking friend, 'was not given to boasting ; indeed, he would have said with one of your own dramatists—

> Men, that thank themselves first
> For any good they do, take off the lustre
> And blot the benefit.

Yet every now and then, as he drank in the waters of the little runlet, and rejoiced in the busy hum of the insects that swarmed in his branches, and at the plain song of the cuckoo, who, in *his* short summer months, was usually to be found there, would remark, as he gazed on the abundant oaks in his locality, "We, in our day, since the Druids left off to claim us as their own, have done much for the churches of the land, all of which formerly were built of our timber, and, in most cases, thatched with the reeds of the brook." '

And I fell a-thinking how grand were the old beams in our churches, and the king-posts, and the queen-posts, and the ties, and the braces, and the backs or principal rafters, and the ridge-pieces, and the purlins. How often has a well-timbered roof kept an old church together for years ! The venerable old tree has full and proper cause for his constant assertion—'*There is nothing like oak !*'

As for the reeds of the brook, till straw became more common, what came first to hand was first used ; and even yet, where the Broads supply the material in plenty, Norfolk can show more than one thatched church and chancel. We retain the name of our Saxon forefathers in the term '*thack-tiles*,' to *thack* or *thatch* meaning to cover—to give a roof of whatever kind. So the Scotch, as may be seen in Jamieson and other writers, speak of *theiking* a church with *lead*, or a

house with *stane*. But there is a passage in Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation,' which says all that need be said on this point, and I give it from an English version for the benefit of the general reader.

'A.D. 652. In the meantime Bishop Aidan being dead, Finan, who was ordained and sent by the Scots, succeeded him in the bishopric, and built a church in the isle of Lindisfarne, the episcopal see; nevertheless, after the manner of the Scots, he made it not of stone, but of hewn oak, and covered it with reeds; and the same was afterwards dedicated in honour of St. Peter the Apostle, by the reverend Archbishop Theodore. Eadbert, also bishop of that place, took off the thatch, and covered it, both roof and walls, with plates of lead.'

We shall have to speak in an after page of the 'Monasterium Sancti Petri' in Shrewsbury—so styled in Domesday—which was so wooded and so thatched, illustrative of the venerable Oak's words.

Enough, for the present, of his locality and rambling talk, as another reference will be made to the wooden churches in a subsequent chapter, when the old Abbey comes under review.

CHAPTER IV.

SOME INSTRUCTIONS OF THE PRESENT OAK'S TIME-HONOURED FATHER.

That man must daily wiser grow,
Whose search is bent himself to know.
GAY'S *Fables*: '*The Bear in a Boat.*'

I never with important air
In conversation overbear;
My tongue within my lips I rein,
For who talks much, talks much in vain.
Ibid. '*Shepherd and Philosopher.*'

Religion can show itself in any place, in any soil, in any air—in the closet and in the field, in the home and in the temple. This man may have a proud heart in a cottage, another a low and humble soul in a palace. For every man's thoughts are not as low-built as his home, nor do every great man's imaginations tower in the air.—A. FARINDON, *Serm.* vol. ii. 1089, folio.

No man is lord of anything,
Though in and of him there be much consisting,
Till he communicate his parts to others.
Troilus and Cressida, Act iii. sc. 3.

'FAR advanced in years as I now am,' said my Talking Friend—and I strove to give him the best attention my drowsiness would admit of—'I can profitably call to mind at this time the many instructions my venerable father gave me; and although, like most youngsters, I did not heed them so much as I ought to have done, experience has assured me of their truth. Perhaps in your days the counsel of the old is even more disregarded than it was when I was an oakling in the full pride and vigour of my strength; but, as all find out, first or last, he has to repent at leisure who is too conceited to listen when the wise open their mouths. You know very well who said:

As sooth is sayd, elde hath great advantage,
In elde is bothe wisdom and usage:
Men may the old out-runne but not out-rede.

Though, however, inattentive at times, I contrived to learn a good deal; and as you are a good listener, I will report to you first one thing and then another, as I call them to remembrance. Generally, in matters of much concernment, what suits one age will not be unsuitable to another.'

As he said this his old leaves rustled once more, and the sound was pleasant.

'One point,' he presently continued, 'which the old oak always dwelt upon was "THE MARK," and it was his constant counsel that all the neighbourhood should look well to their boundaries and keep them. It was as certainly the way to peace, as the removal of a *balk* or a *marc-stane* was to discord. He had seen much of life, and he knew it well.'

And as I heard these words, I fell a-thinking once more, and the verses of the Book of Deuteronomy flashed forthwith across my mind. 'Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it.' 'Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen.' Avaricious encroachment in one way only leads to it in another, even in the Church of God. No common denunciation is that in Hosea, 'The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: therefore I will pour out My wrath upon them like water.' And as I thought on these passages in the Bible, I remembered how I once caught a man removing my landmark stealthily like a rogue, and I reproved him sharply, because he set himself up for a precisian, and reviled the Church of God. I was sure at the time that he would do mischief with both hands earnestly when he could, and I was not deceived in my man. Mischief and he have since been scoffing pen-fellows.

But, as for the venerable Oak, he, with all his rustling boughs, little knew what authority he had for the reservation of all just boundary rights. And then, if we turn to profane history, and cast our eye towards the land of Grecia, we shall find that the Peloponnesian war itself was not unconnected with a boundary question. The Athenians, at least, in the words of old Hobbes, 'recriminated the Megarians for having

tilled holy ground and un-set-out with bounds.' It is hardly necessary to refer to the difficulties we ourselves have had with our grasping American brethren on this head. We have only overcome by yielding.

And I thought again how much wisdom there was in the simple words of the Fourth Part of the Homily for the Rogation Week, 'to be spoken to such parishes where they use their perambulation, for the oversight of the bounds and limits of their town,' wherein thanks being offered to Almighty God for replenishing the earth with His goodness, we have 'occasion secondarily given us in our walks on those days to consider the old ancient bounds and limits belonging to our own township, and to other our neighbours bordering about us, to the intent that we should be content with our own, and not contentiously strive for others, to the breach of charity, by any encroaching one upon another or claiming one of the other, farther than that in ancient right and custom our forefathers have peaceably laid out unto us for our commodity and comfort. Surely a great oversight it were in us, which be Christian men in one profession of faith, daily looking for that heavenly inheritance which is bought for every one of us by the blood-shedding of our Saviour Jesus Christ, to strive and fall to variance for the earthly bounds of our towns, to the disquiet of our life betwixt ourselves, to the wasting of our goods by vain expences and costs in the law. We ought to remember that our habitation is but transitory and short in this mortal life. The more shame it were to fall out into immortal hatred among ourselves for so brittle possessions, and so to lose our eternal inheritance in heaven. It may stand well with charity in a Christian man quietly to maintain his right and just title. And it is the part of every good townsman to preserve, as much as lieth in him, the liberties, franchises, bounds, and limits of his town and country, but yet to strive for our very rights and duties with the breach of love and charity, which is the only living of a Christian man, or with the hurt of godly peace and quiet, by the which we be knit together in one general fellowship of Christ's family, in one common household of God, that is utterly forbidden.' Then again, within a page or so: 'They do much provoke the

wrath of God upon themselves which use to grind up the *doles and marks* which of ancient time were laid for the division of *meers and balks* in fields, to bring the owners to their right. They do wickedly which do turn up the ancient *terries* of the fields that old men beforetimes with great pains did tread out, whereby the lords' records (which be the tenants' evidences) be perverted and translated sometime to the disinheriting of the right owner, to the oppression of the poor fatherless or the poor widow. The covetous men know not what inconveniences they be the authors of.' And once more: 'It is lamentable to see in some places how greedy men use to plough and grate upon their neighbour's land that lieth next them; how covetous men now-a-days plough up so nigh the common balks and walks, which good men beforetime made the greater and broader, partly for the commodious walk of his neighbours, partly for the better shack in harvest time, to the more comfort of his poor neighbour's cattle. It is a shame to behold the insatiableness of some covetous persons in their doings, that where their ancestors left of their land a broad and sufficient bier-walk, to carry the corpse to the Christian sepulchre, how men pinch at such bier-balks, which, by long use and custom, ought to be inviolably kept for that purpose; and how they either quite ear them up, and turn the dead body to be borne further about in the high streets, or else, if they leave any such mear, it is too strait for two to walk on.'

None, save those who have studied them well, know anything at all of the great wisdom contained in our rare old Homilies. There are parts out of date in them, no doubt—there are some mistakes, as mistakes will be found in everything human—but they speak plain truth, and, as old Robert Harris says in one of his sermons, they never 'keep hewing at a text as if they would lame it,' as is often the case with some modern orators.

There is an old proverbial expression of the Greeks and Romans—*μέχρι βωμῶν—usque ad aras*—which Bishop Sanderson calls, more than once, 'The *altar stone*, that is, the *meer stone*,' giving this counsel: 'The more need have we to look narrowly to our treadings, lest the tempter should have laid

a snare for us in a way wherein we suspected it not, and so surprise us ere we be aware;' and I recollect very well in treading the boundaries of Patching and Clapham parishes, in the year 1835, in the county of Sussex, how many were the *crosses* and the *mere-stones* we found on the Downs, literally illustrating the lines in Bishop Hall's Satires :

> Some headless cross they digged on their lea,
> Or rolled some marked mere-stone in the way,
> Poor simple men !

A few years more—perhaps by this time—all these old marks will have passed away, but it was a pleasant thing to meet with 'THE CROSS' in such places, and to rejoice in the unpretending faith which knew of no better sign than that. My venerable friend, the Rev. William Nourse, who was with me at the time, the then Rector of Clapham, had often trod these boundaries (of much consequence previous to the Tithe Commutation maps—even yet, where they remain, for these maps contain great errors), and he informed me that the grandsires of the youngest children present never recollected any other mark being made. Two boys—it was a holiday to them, being well fed and paid—of from nine to twelve were with us and the churchwardens, and every doubtful point was particularly impressed upon them. This, at least, was one way of explaining the term, 'SAVE THE MARK!'

'Another matter on which my venerable father was almost eloquent,' continued my considerate friend, for the rustling of his leaves was low that I might not be disturbed, 'was friendliness and hospitality. Of the latter, he said that in a wild and thinly peopled district it was an absolute necessity. Many a time and oft the Cymry, on their way down from the mountains, were so hard driven as to eat of his acorns and of Brother Beech's three-cocked nuts, and they were welcome. There were plenty left, in ordinary seasons, for the dormouse and the squirrel. It pitied him much to see fine-built men half-starved and hunger-bitten, and he would willingly, if he might, have helped them in their time of great need. He was, indeed, though surrounded in his early years by something close to heathenism, a most Christian oak, given to hospitality. And if, as I hinted at above, he lived himself

somewhat too *fast*, it was from no selfish feeling. To see gladness in the countenance of others was his greatest happiness, and I verily believe, rather than not relieve distress, he would have given away, not his acorns only, but his leaves and his branches too! There was nothing niggardly in his nature. The hardest part about him was his bark! Upon one occasion, when not only his favourite squirrels and dormice were pillaging his property, but a whole flight of rooks and magpies threatened to devour his substance incontinently (as you have seen them in later days attack the neighbouring walnut trees), I ventured to hint that *they* were too bold, and *he* too indulgent (you may call to mind your spoiled child Shakespeare's words:

> Every one that flatters thee
> Is no friend in misery;
> Words are easy like the wind,
> Faithful friends are hard to find.
> Every man will be thy friend
> Whilst thou hast wherewith to spend;
> But if store of crowns be scant,
> No man will supply thy want);

and I can never forget how much he seemed offended at the remark, for he presently *shut me up* (according to your modern and very elegant form of speech!) with curt and pithy words, "If the air and the dews of heaven, the showers and the gracious rain, and the winds as they blow, give me sustenance, and root me but the deeper, methinks I should never forget the wants of others!"'

And this set me a-thinking again, and I considered how great a virtue hospitality has always been considered in the infancy of nations. Even the most savage tribes have yielded to its summons. Not to be open-handed when need calls—

> All that shows
> A man unhandsome, undigested dough;

or, as Achilles called Thersites, 'a very crusty batch of nature.' We may be sure that where there is no readiness to give and to communicate, it is all nature and no grace. In the words of the excellent Bishop Andrewes, 'If plenteously God hath given you, you ought to be plenteous in giving; and

not when the Lord hath his *ephah* great, wherein He hath meted to you, to make your *hin* small, whereby you measure to the poor, turning the plenty of heaven into the scarcity of earth.' Save us from all such niggardliness!

Never, perhaps, was the blessing of a little help in time of need better illustrated than in a beautiful passage in the First Book of Samuel: 'And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat, and they made him drink water; and they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins; and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread nor drunk any water three days and three nights.' Who, as he reads such a passage as this, bethinks him not of those anywhere, no matter where, whose children might be crying for bread, and pinched by want, hardly bestead or hunger-bitten, whilst we had enough and to spare? And it causes deep searchings of heart, and I said to myself, OPPORTUNITY LOST IS GRIEVED OVER FOR EVER—by thoughtful and serious men, because it was an error and an omission, not ignorance, but negligence, trenching close upon sin; by the thoughtless and indifferent, because, one way or another, it was to their own hindrance, loss, or damage. Their own profit was concerned, and they felt the smart of not being wise in time.

It was a goodly opportunity that betided those who chanced upon this hungry Egyptian—good for him in his straits, and good for them in theirs. But, whenever we have an opportunity of relieving distress, let us not say, 'It was a chance that happened unto us'; the rather, as Christians in Christian land, let us consider it God's providence, who, as His Holy Book declares, provideth for the sick and needy, and alway alloweth the poor. Depend upon it, 'When the people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty in the wilderness' of this world, he is a privileged and a happy man who, through grace given, has the will and the heart to go forth from his place and help them, so that one may say, 'They that were hungry ceased.' He worketh not a miracle as his Lord and Saviour did, but he goeth about doing good as He did, and whosoever, according to the capacities of the creature,

so doeth, is blessed in his deed, and the Lord from out of Sion shall as surely bless him as He did that woman who brake the alabaster box of very precious ointment and poured it on His head; for He said of the good work she wrought, 'She hath done what she could.'

Some time ago, when the Recollections of that very good man, William Jay, were published, I made the extract following, and give it as an illustration:

'I remember some years ago to have buried a corpse. In the extremities of the audience that surrounded me, I discovered a female, wrinkled with age and bending with weakness; one hand held a motherless grandchild, the other wiped away her tears with a woollen apron. I pressed towards her when the service was closed. "Have you, too, lost a friend?" She heaved a melancholy sigh: "The Lord bless her memory!" I soon found out that the deceased had allowed her for several years sixpence a week. O my God! Is it possible that the application of a sum so inconsiderable should cause a widow's heart to sing for joy, and save the child of the needy!'

Good old man! And when the interest in thy latter days was not over-considerate, I can easily realise how thou wert touched at the heart by such an illustration of Christian charity. The question needed not to be put to thee:

> What's the matter,
> That this distemper'd messenger of wet,
> The many-coloured iris, rounds thine eye?

These were what might be very well called 'INSTRUCTIONS' of the veteran Oak, containing, as it were, one's duty to one's neighbour. Other points he used to dwell upon were what some smooth-tongued birch would designate more mundane or worldly; for different trees, like different sects of Christians, have a form of speech known chiefly to the initiated, and perhaps not always to them.

'The value of timber, especially of oak, did not escape the notice of my time-honoured father. Though he lived inland, his knowledge was not confined to his own locality, like that of home-keeping youths with homely wits. Migratory birds gave him constant information of different seas and foreign climes, and it was a great pleasure to him to

receive it. And it was upon an occurrence of great waste in the neighbouring forest that he took occasion to remark that many a tree barbarously cut down would have made fine ship timber—he had heard, indeed, of many a boat that was made out of a single tree, and he saw no cause for disbelieving the report. And, he added, coracles and little cobs do very well at present, but the time will come when the Severn, into which our neighbouring brook flows, will be navigated by barges and long craft, and then the better the timber the better the boat. He inveighed, to be sure, against the wanton waste of firewood (for coal was, in his days, rather talked about than much used, though known to the Romans, as I will tell you some other time), yet he admitted the necessity and the wisdom of burning up the scrub so as to enlarge the march, shrewdly remarking, "Our giant thistle is a bad weed, but for the most part you shall find that it grows in ground which may be turned to much good. Only find scrub in which there are thistles big enough to fasten a bridle to, and you may be sure that in time it will yield ample returns." I must not forget to add on this head that my aged father had some queer notions about the time of felling timber—queer I thought them at the time, but I am informed his views had pith in them.'

I may observe on this latter remark that it is a point admitted in almost all countries, and that in some it is carried to a great nicety if not into extremes. For instance, in a recent publication: 'There is another point in connection with the period of felling which ought to be noticed. It is a widespread opinion that trees should be felled during the *wane of the moon*. This planetary influence is open to doubt, but the opinion prevails wherever there are large forests; and the woodcutters of South America act upon it, and the natives of this country (India) believe that the timber is much more likely to decay if cut when the moon is in *crescente*.' Probably old experience is not altogether wrong even in a matter so slight as this, and all clever planters know that what Virgil spoke so long ago is true to the letter:

> Quin etiam cæli regionem in cortice signant,
> Ut, quo quæque modo steterit, qua parte calores

Austrinos tulerit, quæ terga obverterit axi,
Restituant: adeo in teneris consuescere multum est.

He on their bark will even notify
The quarter of the sky to which they turn'd,
That, howsoe'er each slip was wont to stand,
Or with whatever side it met the north,
And bore the southern heats, it may obtain
A like position still. Of such avail
Are habits rightly formed in tender years.

Perhaps, after all, what Bishop Andrewes said of men like ourselves is true of the trees of the wood, and we gain a great loss by not profiting by the experience of bygone generations. 'There is a humour in men which we are all given up to by nature—to be marvellously desirous to try conclusions in matters that are rare and unknown to them, contemning things common, and to be fond after strange novelties.' No common observer of mankind was good Bishop Andrewes, a great lover of the people's proverbs, and a great divine.

These, and others many, were the views and instructions which my Talking Friend communicated to me. Memory fails me, or I might have recorded others; but, like these, they would have been a heterogeneous mixture, for, like an old friend of mine, made up of flesh and blood—body, soul, and spirit—and not of trunk, boughs, bark, and leaves, he was in the habit of talking in *jumps*, or, as we say more commonly, by fits and starts.

Still, whatever he said was from his heart of oak. And I thought again with myself (being much in the habit of so doing): the plain practical sense of the English nation only holds to what is practically useful, and that *view* of things (connected with stern principle, uprightness, and generally righteous dealing, which would rather stick to word and covenant than unrighteous profit and advantage, however large) is one especial source of its prosperity. And I may apply here some words of Professor Max Müller's, in his 'Lectures on the Science of Language:' 'Let it be known that the successive strata of the geologist are a deception to the miner; that the astronomical tables are useless to the navigator; that chemistry is nothing but an expensive amusement,

of no use to the manufacturer or to the farmer; and astronomy, chemistry, and geology, will soon share the fate of alchemy and astrology.' Of all people in the world the English people are the last to be contented with what the celebrated Platonist, John Smith, called *shady nothings*, 'something that hath a name, but nothing else.'

And if anyone choose to speak of the venerable Oak's words as truisms, surplusage, or platitudes, perhaps in these days of high-pressure education it may not be amiss to revert sometimes to first principles, or, as a dry observer said, 'When the Euclid, algebra, and geography display is over, let us do a little plain reading, writing, and arithmetic.'

It is not to be denied that there is nothing better than good, plain, and simple instruction. And I mind me how, when one asked counsel of Cardinal Pole what method and way was best to be taken to understand the obscure places in St. Paul's Epistles, he answered him, 'He thought the best and the shortest way was to read first the latter part of those Epistles which do intreat of Christian manners, and understand it, and express it in life and good manners, and then to go unto the first part, where the matters of faith are subtilly and exactly handled, saying, "That God will give His Spirit of understanding soonest unto those that with their whole hearts seek to serve Him."' None need wonder that Maister Camden inserted this among 'Wise Speeches.'

Meanwhile drowsiness overcame me, and the semi-sense of dreamland passed into the full oblivion of sleep, as I contemplated the leaves of the Talking Oak rustling so musically. The last I recollect of anything out of dreamland were the lines of Homer and Horace, the former of which I was trying to compare with my friend T. S. Brandreth's translations, of which the late Provost of Eton, Dr. Hawtrey, said, 'He thought it was the best of the lot!' These were his very words. In my waking hours, as I told a friend the other day, 'It never answers to take down a book of Homer—I must read it through, and there is no help for it!'

> Οἵη περ φύλλων γενεὴ, τοιήδε καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
> Φύλλα τὰ μέν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη
> Τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη·
> Ὣς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ, ἡ μὲν φύει, ἡ δ' ἀπολήγει.

Ut silvæ foliis pronos mutantur in annos,
Prima cadunt: ita verborum vetus interit ætas,
Et juvenum ritu florent modo nata vigentque.
Debemur morti nos nostraque.

Alike the races are of leaves and men:
The wind the leaves disperses, and the wood
Produces others in the hour of spring:
So flourishes and fades each race of men.

Some four years after this was written Lord Derby published his translation. It is as follows:

Great son of Tydeus, why my race inquire?
The race of man is like the race of leaves:
Of leaves, one generation by the wind
Is scattered on the earth; another soon
In spring's luxuriant verdure bursts to light.
So with our race: these flourish, these decay!

So hard is it to translate the prince of poets!

CHAPTER V.

SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF THE PRESENT OAK'S TIME-HONOURED FATHER.

Non opus est verbis: credite rebus, ait.
OVID, *Fast.* ii. 734.

Nay, nay, hear me.
'T is somewhat indirectly, I confess;
But there is much advancement in the world,
That came in indirectly.
WEBSTER, *The Devil's Law Case*, ii. 66, Dyce.

Many keep in their words to let out more, as men do water at the mill-dam. When you must needs speak a little, raise the floodgates of your mouth, as men do at the mill, and let them down quickly.—*The Ancren Riwle*, p. 73, Camden Society, 1853.

Meal and bran together
He throws without distinction.
Coriolanus, act iii. sc. 1.

THE author of the 'Physical Theory of Another Life' (Isaac Taylor) asks: 'Might not the human memory be compared to a field of sepulture thickly stocked with the remains of many generations; but of all the thousands whose dust leaves the surface, a few only are saved from immediate oblivion upon tablets and urns; while the many are, at present, utterly lost to knowledge? Nevertheless, each of the dead has left in that soil an imperishable germ; and all, without distinction, shall another day start up, and claim their due.'

How marvellously strange a thing is the human memory! What a gift from the treasury of heaven! True, the lower orders of the creatures have it, but then with them it is cousin-german to instinct, and they know not that they know; whereas man's knowledge is widely distinct, and to know that he knows is a clear line of demarcation between knowledge and instinct. The beast *ruminates*, but the term with

it only refers to the food in the stomach; man *ruminates*, but when he chews the cud of memory, it is the mind that is at work, recollecting things past, and gathering together, as in some great storehouse, what otherwise might have been lost entirely. 'Memory,' said Addison in the 'Spectator,' and with his usual freshness, 'is perpetually looking back, when we have nothing present to entertain us; it is like those repositories in animals that are filled with stores of food on which they may ruminate when their present pasture fails.' What were man without memory? One has only to look upon those intellectual wrecks where the warder of the brain, as Shakespeare calls it, has yielded up its post and ceded its place! Few readers of the same great poet will forget the words of Prince Henry on the death of John:

> It is too late; the life of all his blood
> Is touched corruptibly: and his pure brain
> (Which some suppose the soul's frail dwelling-house)
> Doth, by the idle comments that it makes,
> Foretell the ending of mortality.

There is an ode of Wordsworth's, entitled 'Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood,' of which much was said *pro* and *con.* many years ago, when it was first published. Perhaps there may be a dash of Platonism too much in it, especially in the commencing line of the passage I am about to quote; but I suspect the reader will thank me for referring him to it:

> Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
> The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar;
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home:
> Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
> Shades of the prison-house begin to close
> Upon the growing boy,
> But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
> He sees it in his joy;
> The youth who daily farther from the East
> Must travel, still is nature's priest,

And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended ;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

Such were the thoughts which flashed across my mind when I was about to throw together some supposed recollections of the present Oak's father, a sort of *olla podrida*—the very *miscellanea ludi*, as the Satirist speaks—in plain English, the orts and scraps of the gladiator's school. But every book of this sort is one of mixed information, and the gentle reader, I trust, will find the fiction neither unintelligible nor uninteresting. There is oftentimes a freshness in what is old.

It was mentioned before that the Old Oak in his earlier days recollected well much that was said of Bishop Chad, and I need not have felt surprised when I heard my talking friend speak of the introduction of Christianity by St. Augustine as doubtful or even more. Anyone who will take the trouble to turn to the Saxon Chronicle under A.D. 596 will find these words: 'This year Pope Gregory sent Augustine into Britain, with a great many monks, who preached the Word of God to the nation of the Angles.'

It was after a heavy gale of wind, in which he had been much shaken and knocked about, that my old friend said to me one day : 'Such hard knocks as these my old father underwent year after year, and he bore it well and without murmur and complaint.' And I recollect his saying, "Those that held to the faith which they had received from their fathers, had, when St. Augustine came, to undergo something of the like sort." Very good people, he said, no doubt were they all, but they came in with some noise and blustering, and implied that we were utterly ignorant and in the dark, which was not really the case. To a certain extent we were ignorant, as there is ignorance in plenty now in your great cities ; but quite in the dark we were not. Christianity, in fact, had been introduced into the island very early ; I would not speak harshly, but perhaps the Saxons did much to tread it out.'

And the Talking Oak kept silence, and his leaves ceased to rustle.

Here evidently he was on delicate ground, for although

the older oaks of the land held to the Druids and to pagan rites, his old father had fallen in with Saxon compeers, and with them, if I may so speak, had joined the general conversion of that race to Christianity. And here was the difficulty. The Saxons for long time were most heathenish and cruel, as cruel perhaps as the ancient Druids in their day, or whoever else were most so, and they were the means of driving out, or into corners, the ancient Christianity of the land.

'The Antiquities of the British Churches,' or the 'Origines Britannicæ,' have been treated of by an able hand, and to this day the work of Bishop Lloyd, with such corrections as all works of this kind need, whether from fresh documentary evidence or other discoveries, will stand the test. It may, perhaps, be a matter of too much curiosity to enter into many of the details recorded there and elsewhere ; but this is quite clear, that by the end of the second century our land had received the glad tidings of the Gospel. The words of Eusebius to Theodoret are known to all readers of ecclesiastical history. Many even yet are ready to maintain that St. Paul, after his journey into Spain, came and preached here. Be it so, or be it not—and letting pass all such fables as that of Joseph of Arimathæa and Glastonbury Abbey—when St. Augustine came, he came into a land where, however much heathenism there was, there too was the torch of Christianity handed on, as in that ancient race, from hand to hand. In modern days his mission might have been called a REVIVAL ; and however little good there may be in the ecstasies and wild excitements which not unusually accompany such proceedings, with a good deal of evil mixed with it, there was a great deal of good too in the preaching of St. Augustine, and it might not improperly be called a second conversion. But for all these matters, and for his Romish imperiousness, and the proper determination of the British Church to resist, the reader is referred to Bede, and others who have followed him, and if they wish for a most interesting and touching account of early days in a more modern garb, by all means let them turn to Wilson Evans' 'Tales of the Ancient British Church,' one of those many excellent books which the pupil and scholar of the late Bishop Butler of Shrewsbury, and the

excellent author of the 'Rectory of Valehead,' has quietly put forth in his work and labour of love for the benefit of the people. This matter, however, must be passed by for the time, incidentally to be referred to hereafter. It was necessary to touch upon it here owing to the difficulty of the Old Oak's position, for it was commonly said, and as commonly repeated, that wherever the Saxon prevailed the face of Christianity was extinguished. His evident conclusion was, that all who are called heathens are not necessarily such. Many a tender heart, in the worst of times, does not yield to rites unholy, or take a part in cruelties which curdle the blood and make both ears to tingle. No doubt the Old Oak thought the most charitable judgments the best.

> Men shall deal unadvisedly sometimes,
> Which after hours give leisure to repent.

In reference to the various people who had at different times tenanted the district in which he lived, the Old Oak said, 'and I remembered well his words,' said my Talking Friend: 'Whilst we stood firm for the most part before the blast, even when it piped its wildest from Habberley Hole and the bluffs of Pontesford Hill, there are many comers and goers, and the district often changes its settlers. Might but too often proves right, or rather usurps its place. Did I not see,' continued he, 'Ulger and Ethel driven out by Odo, and within a period of fifty years did not Edric supersede Kenric, as he too was ousted by Eddar and Holgot? More recently still, did not Tursti and Bineh slay Holgot, and did not Roger the Pagan say, when he brained Bineh with a flail, that pagan as they called him, he was more merciful in his deeds than he who had slain little children and burned old men in their homesteads, who were too weak to escape the hand of the avenger?'

On such matters as these my pleasant, patronising friend, told me his father would often dilate, and one's thoughts naturally reverted to the advantages of law well carried out, and the benefits of such rule and authority as hindered one man from oppressing another, or injuring his neighbour with impunity. But even since then, and in days not only of the

Tudors, but of the Stuarts as well as the Guelphs, justice has not always triumphed; but there has been perversion of right and the tyranny of wrong. Happily, however, in the long run, law has the 'pre-eminence,' and although there is as great truth as beauty in that sonnet of Shakespeare's—

> Full many a glorious morning have I seen
> Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
> Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
> Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy,
> Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
> With ugly rack on his celestial face,
> And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
> Stealing unseen to west with their disgrace;—

yet, as Hooker so clearly puts it, so it is: 'The public power of all societies is above every soul contained in the same societies. And the principal use of their power is to give laws unto all that are under it; which laws in such case we must obey, unless there be reason showed which may necessarily enforce that the law of reason or God doth enjoin the contrary. Because except our own private and but probable resolutions be by the law of public determinations overruled, we take away all possibility of sociable life in the world.' To which he fervently adds, enjoining reverence due to law generally: 'Of Law, there can be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world; all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power; both angels and men and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy.'

Not unconnected with the subject above mentioned were the recollections of the Old Oak's father—as things became somewhat more settled—of the early converse of the people about the lands in which they had a share; 'not the MARCH, as the MARCK,' he would add, and he seemed to take a great interest in a matter of which I am not at all sure that we understand the bearing. How many things are there of which a mere dream-shade only survives! How tender are those lines of Henry Vaughan:—

They are all gone into the world of light,
And I alone sit lingering here;
Their very memory is fair and bright,
And my sad thoughts doth clear!

He that hath found some fledg'd bird's nest may know
At first sight if the bird be flown;
But what fair dell or grove he sings in now,
That is to him unknown.

Upon one occasion—there had been an aurora borealis, and storms were brewing, and there was great atmospheric disturbance—my Talking Friend told me 'how his father recollected the people's talking of the battle of Kenwald at *Pontesbyrig* against the Welsh, and how it was decided by the shooting of a charmed arrow,' and himself held to a tradition, delivered down by the oldest oaks in the neighbourhood, 'how, on Palm Sunday, it was long customary to seek for the golden arrow on Ponsert Hill,' the local abbreviation of Pontesford. Clearly the Old Oak connected battles and tumults, in some extraordinary way, with the aurora, as others have done in all ages, discerning in those ruddy flashes of electric light the prancings of the war-horse and the clash of the chariots, and the rush of the bloodthirsty.

After one of these dreamy conversations, I turned to the Saxon Chronicle, and there, under the year A.D. 661, sure enough I found the following:

'This year, during Easter, Kenwald fought at Pontesburig, and Wulfhere, the son of Benda, laid the country waste as far as Ashdown.'

The Saxons, who followed here in the track of the Romans, added to this name (Pontes) Ford and Byrig or Bury—Ford, from the river which they had to cross, and Byrig from the old British encampment on Pontesford Hill. But the curious point in the history still remains, which is this. Till within a few years (when the writer was a boy), and perhaps even yet, a wake was still held on the top of that old hill, and there the people went in crowds to enjoy themselves with their children and their household servants, and no Sunday in the year was more anxiously looked for than Palm Sunday, when crowds from all quarters came trooping to Ponsert Hill in search of *the golden arrow*!

Whether the arrow sought for is a charmed one—as within my recollection, in Perthshire, a silver bullet or a silver sixpence was an efficacious bolt against witches and warlocks, which took the shape of blue or white hares—I cannot affirm, but the old superstition is a curious one, and I have thought it worth recording, knowing nothing more about its origin. Arrows, however, have from early date had a charmed name. 'As for the tale of Abaris,' says Herodotus, 'who is said to have been a Hyperborean' (one naturally calls to mind Swedish and Lapland witches, and their broomsticks, one of which the reader may see in the title-page to Mr. Horace Marryat's 'One Year in Sweden), 'and to have gone with his arrow all round the world without once eating, I shall pass it over in silence.' Good, thoughtful, considerate, old historian![1]

I may note, in passing on, that the able historians of Shrewsbury (kind, all of them, to me in my boyhood, and all now departed), quote a petition of one poor Thomas Lloyd, who, to mend his circumstances, petitioned that he might be permitted to proclaim a *silver game* within the town; but they say they do not know what the *silver game* is, never having met with any mention of it before. My reason for mentioning it is that the writer of the petition was a 'Fletcher' (i.e. *Flechier*, from *Flèche*), and that an *arrow* must have had something to do with it.

Upon one occasion, when some of the Cymry passed on their way beneath the Old Oak's locality on a visit to Pengwerne—the modern Shrewsbury—they spoke of some marvellous gold circlets they had taken from the Saxon intruders, and on which they seemed to put great value. On my inquiring what they were, he told me 'they were the coronets of their kings and nobles, and that he recollected a very old man —Uther the Saxon, he was called—who had one in his possession, which he called *cynehelm*, or *cynebeáh*, sometimes

[1] I have given Rawlinson's translation, but the original implies that to him his arrow was as a broomstick. 'Λέγων ὡς τὸν ὀϊστὸν περιέφερε κατὰ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν,' lib. iv. c. 36. That the arrow of Abaris is 'a mythical tradition of the magnet,' is very far-fetched.

giving it the name of a *torc*, which, I believe, the Romans left behind them.'

All readers of Roman history will call to mind the name of 'Torquatus,' who derived his appellation from the *Torques* or *Torc—Torquis ademptæ*, are the words of Ovid in the 'Fasti.' It was evidently introduced by the Gauls to the Cymry, and was taken up by the Teutons and Anglo-Saxons. One cannot well forget the words of Livy: 'T. Manlius Gallum, cum quo provocatus manus conseruit, in conspectu duorum exercituum cæsum torque spoliavit;' or those of Virgil, who made it a part of the Trojan youth's adornment:

> It pectore summo
> Flexilis obtortî per collum circulus auri.

Numbers have been found in Iceland and in Scandinavia, but antiquaries must be left to settle the matter whether these have been confounded with the coronet, i.e. the *cynehelm*, of the Anglo-Saxons or no. It is quite clear that in one shape or another Persians of distinction had them. My Talking Friend said no more upon the subject. It was not agreeable to him that the Cymry should have got them into their possession.

I may note here, amongst other odd recollections of my Talking Friend's father, that there was a little jealousy in his mind when the ASH-TREE was over-bepraised. He admitted that the ashen spear-shaft was the best that might be, but maintain he would that 'there was nothing like oak as a wood.' (Was he not right? Hath not the oak his Hebrew name for his strength?) All this showed how well he knew that the Anglo-Saxons had a preference for the ash. It intimated, nevertheless, that he rather sided with the Druids and the Cymry than with the Anglo-Saxons *in some respects*, though *generally* he liked to hear the Saxon well spoken of. He was obliged, however, to hear the ancient mead-buckets called by the name of *æscen* as well as *buc* or *bucas*, and he admitted that there was a predilection for the former word; but he added, drily, 'The ash has always had to do with charms and incantations!'

Anyone versed in Icelandic and Scandinavian lore at once

calls to mind the Eddas and the Sagas, the Yggdrasill and the Askr; and what one said of man's readiness to take umbrage, might be said of the Old Oak: 'Ever be wary, for the tinder of thy nature will soon take fire.'

Most oaks—trees, indeed, generally, which were worthy of a separate nomenclature—took their names from their places; some from celebrated persons, as St. Augustine's Oak, before referred to. But, as he informed me, the Old Oak said one day to his son—it was a hot summer's day, and the little runlet was almost dry, and he seemed sore athirst—'Many a tree has taken to itself a name, before the person after which he named himself existed, and a surname too, before the existence of surnames. In fact, trees are as vain as men!'

I was turning this remark over in my mind, and it led me on insensibly to an historical point thus adverted to by the learned Camden:

'In England, certain it is that as the better part even from the Conquest, by little and little, took surnames, so they were not settled among the common people fully till about the time of Edward II. As for myself, I have never found any hereditary surname before the Conquest, neither any that I know; and yet both I myself, and others whom I know, have pored and puzzled upon many an old record and evidence to satisfy ourselves herein; and, for my part, I will acknowledge myself greatly indebted to them that will clear this doubt.'

The historical question has been adverted to often since Camden's day, and there is yet plenty of disputation on such matters in the hands of the antiquaries; but as to the vanity of names and surnames, titles and precedency, that was the same in Horace's days as now, and he adverts to it in his subtle, keen-cutting satire, which goes directly to the heart without leaving any jagged wound behind it:

> Quinte, puta, aut Publi (gaudent prænomine molles
> Auriculæ), tibi me virtus tua fecit amicum.

It is the same vanity, in another shape, which the prince of antiquaries refers to in a subsequent page. 'As though, in the continual mutability of the world, conversion of States,

and fatal periods of families, five hundred years were not sufficient antiquity for a family or name, whereas but very few have reached thereunto.' I might have said to my Talking Friend, 'How few oaks, too?'

Old Burton, in his 'Anatomie of Melancholy,' which more people talk of than read—as *they* used to talk of Robin Hood's bow who never *drew* it—has two remarkable passages on the duration of nations and families, which, if they do not contain a *truth*, contain a very *truthful fiction*—not an Irishism, but in accordance with the Italians' form of speech, 'Se non è vero è ben trovato.' How the Old Oak's leaves would have rustled to have heard them!

'And sure, I think, it hath been ordered by God's especial Providence, that in all ages there should be (as usually there is), once in six hundred years, a transmigration of nations, to amend and purify their blood, as we alter seed upon our land, and that there should be, as it were, an inundation of those northern Goths and Vandals, and many such like people, who came out of that continent of Scandin and Sarmatia (as some suppose), and overran, as a deluge, most part of Europe and Africk, to alter (for our good) our complexions, which were much defaced with hereditary infirmities, which by our lust and intemperance we had contracted. A sound generation of strong and able men were sent among us, as these northern men usually are, innocuous, free from riot, and free from diseases, to qualify and make us as those poor naked Indians are generally at this day, and those about Brasil (as a late writer observes), in the isle of Maragnan, free from all hereditary diseases or other contagion, whereas, without help of physic, they live commonly an hundred and twenty years or more, as in the Orcades and many other places. Such are the common effects of temperance and intemperance.'

A very curious passage this, and one to originate further thought. The other, in a later part of the work, is shorter, but to the same purpose:

'I am of Plato and Bodine's mind, that families have their bounds and periods as well as kingdoms, beyond which, for extent or continuance, they shall not exceed six or seven

hundred years, as they then illustrate by a multitude of examples, and which Bucer and Melanchthon approve.'

'Many hard knocks,' said the old to the younger Oak, 'have I received in my day, and it is not without painful experience that I have heard much of the Celts, and have felt the blows of the Cymry, the pure British, the Saxons, the Dane, and the Norman. These many changes and invasions, I dare say, have strengthened you as a people, and the consolidation has formed a mighty nation, on whose realms, as you say in your boastings, the sun never sets. But I must repeat, I had many hard knocks, and, I suppose, "it is the way of the world."' So spake the old Oak to his son, and on his repeating the words to me I thought how Flamineo said:

> We endure the strokes like anvils or hard steel,
> Till pain itself makes us no pain to feel.

All old oaks, like all old people, have had to go through much, and I could imagine how the present Oak's father must have groaned over the follies of the primeval forests around him; the more so when the priggish young oaklings round about, in their ill-timed mirth, would still prate of the progress of civilisation. For, as he said who intuitively sounded human nature:

> Mirth doth search the bottom of annoy;
> Sad souls are slain in merry company;
> Grief best is pleased with grief's society:
> True sorrow then is feelingly sufficed,
> When with like semblance it is sympathised.

And yet, as the present Oak many times told me in my dream, and as I hinted at before, there was no tree living who less grudged the timber in his race, when turned to good purpose. 'Had he lived till my day,' said my Talking Friend once upon a time, 'he might well have grieved over those grand old boards, eight yards long by one broad, which were set upon trestles, and graced our grand halls, before the introduction of what were called your tables *dormant*, never moved, and enough to set people asleep. The moving of the tables made a stir, and there was some mirth in the hall when the beards had wagged all, and toping was not carried to such an excess as to bring an evil name upon innocent

revelry, and the gathering of what you would now call "ALL FRIENDS ROUND THE WREKIN," a very wild place then, the haunt of the wolf and the wild boar, but a very beautiful spot, close upon the far-famed Uniconium, ruthlessly burnt by wild marauders before my father's days, but of which a very aged raven, who frequently paid him a visit, used to croak out most marvellous histories. Grey with eld, it seemed to have made a great impression on him—so much so, indeed, that I must tell you all about it when you are better able to hear than now.'

The real truth was, I had fallen off to sleep again, thinking my old friend had become somewhat prosy; at the same time I had sense enough to compare what he said with the satirist's description of Rome's decline, and I was repeating them to myself when I became lost to all sublunary things:

> Templorum quoque majestas præsentior, et vox
> Nocte fere media, mediamque audita per urbem,
> Litore ab Oceani Gallis venientibus et Dis
> Officium vatis peragentibus, his monuit nos.
> Hanc rebus Latiis curam præstare solebat
> Fictilis et nullo violatus Jupiter auro.
> Illa domi natas nostraque ex arbore mensas
> Tempora viderunt: hos lignum stabat in usus,
> Annosam si forte nucem dejecerat Eurus.

I may add here, that when I was a boy, close upon the locality of the Old Oak, I saw some of those wonderful oak *boards* set on their trestles which I shall never see again, and I never forget the common expression of '*bed and board*.' In primitive times those goodly tables must have groaned under lordly viands. Beautifully polished floors and tables also were to be seen of oak and yew, such as might have led the Roman matrons, so extravagant in their jewellery, to *turn the tables* on their husbands, for, I suppose with Pliny, we are to trace this old proverb to the 'mensarum insania quas feminæ viris contra margaritas regerunt.' The reader who may like to see a good deal that is curious on the subject must turn to the fifteenth chapter of his thirteenth book of 'Natural History,' or to good old Evelyn, who, in his 'Discourse of Forest Trees,' says: 'Of that value they were, and so madly luxuriant the age, that when the men at any time reproached

their wives for their wanton expensiveness in pearl and other rich trifles, they were wont to retort, and turn the tables upon their husbands.'

Who, on looking at the luxury of our days, might not think profitably on what this excellent man, in his generation, said in an after-page?

'Though I do not speak all this for the sake of joint stools, benches, cupboards, massy tables, and gigantic bedsteads, the hospitable utensils of our forefathers, yet I would be glad to encourage the carpenter and the joiner, and rejoice to see that their work and skill do daily improve; and that by the example and application of his Majesty's universities and Royal Society, the restoration and improvement of shipping, mathematical and mechanical art, the use of timber grows daily in more reputation. And it were well if great persons only might be indulged to enrich and adorn their palaces with tapestry, damask, velvet, and Persian furniture, whilst, by some wholesome sumptuary laws, the universal excess of the costly and luxurious movables were prohibited meaner men for divers politic considerations and reasons which it were easy to produce; but by a less influence than severer laws it will be very difficult, if not altogether impossible, to recover ourselves from a softness and vanity which will, in time, not only effem'nate but undo the nation.'

Sumptuary laws have rarely answered, but Evelyn's are wise words. We want a rough-hewn preacher like John Baptist—not merely lawn and sleeves—to speak some home truths, and scourge our luxurious sinfulness!

To set some great judgment near at hand!

CHAPTER VI.

THE PEOPLE GENERALLY IN THE DAYS OF THE PRESENT OAK'S FATHER.

I heard the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds came to me from the fields of sleep.
WORDSWORTH'S *Intimations of Immortality, &c.*

Every village had its witches, sometimes of different sorts; and there was scarcely an old house but had its White Lady or moaning old man with the long beard. There were ghosts in the fens which walked on stilts, whilst the sprites of the hill country rode on flashes of fire.—*Lives of the Engineers*, vol. i. 182.

Non habuit tellus doctos antiqua colonos;
Lassabant agiles aspera bella viros.
Plus erat in gladio quam curvo laudis aratro;
Neglectus domino pauca ferebat ager.
OVID, *Fast.* ii. 515.

Come what come may,
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.
Macbeth, Act i. sc. iii.

'THIS,' said honest Richard Baxter, who had a pleasure in addressing to his dearly beloved friends, the inhabitants of Bridgnorth, the second part of 'The Saints' Everlasting Rest,' 'is the common order of things: the lower the weighty end of the balance descends, the higher is the other lifted up; and the falling of one of the sails of the windmill is the occasion of the rising of the other.'

And is not this something the way with the nations of the world? As one nation sinks, does not another rise? As civilisation progresses westwards—*ἐς μέγαν θάλαμον Ἀμφιτρίτας*, as Sophocles speaks, or, as we might explain it, from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, both of which successively were the Lady Amphitrite's bower and chamber—did not the nations of the East, to some and no inconsiderable extent, fall into barbarism? Did not, in fact, a torch kindled in the

East light up our shore in the West? Perhaps, indeed, the lines of Virgil, in the 'Georgic,' may suggest to the Christian reader the contrast between the different states of knowledge existing now in the East and in the West, summoning up, at the same time, very solemn thoughts:

> Nosque ubi primus equis Oriens afflavit anhelis,
> Illic sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper.

Solemn thoughts, indeed, may they give rise to, for, professing Christianity, we have not always propagated it in the lands we have conquered. I know nothing more painful than the repeated allusions in all books upon India to the anti-Christian lives of Christians. In Bishop Middleton's time, he said, in a letter to Archdeacon Barnes, dated October 20, 1815, that the Hindoos seemed to be shocked 'at the little attention paid by us to religious subjects.' And nothing can be more painful than the comment of Le Bas, when he said, 'The cause of the Gospel had, in truth, much more to fear from the practical atheism of the European than from the bigotry of the languid Hindoo. However degraded by the yoke of his own faith, the humblest native would secretly exult in his own superiority above a society of outcasts who, whatever might be their rank or power, appeared often to be without a creed and almost without a God. And he would naturally be disposed to repel, as the excess of hypocrisy, all attempts to convert him to a faith which appeared to be scorned and trampled on by so many of its professors.' Sad words—very sad words indeed—repeated often since.

> Pudet hæc opprobria nobis
> Et dici potuisse, et non potuisse refelli.

But I must, for the present, let these considerations pass, and look rather to what my Talking Friend told me, from time to time, of the mixed people in his father's days, as touching their habits, conversation, and manner of life and superstition; for everybody, as I hinted at before, was, in those times, superstitious, as not a few are now; and once upon a time, when a lord of Pengwerne passed under the old oak, and his horse stumbled and fell, he heard him repeat a charm which probably resembles the one that has come down to our days,

and is thus given by Mr. Kemble from Chalmers' 'Nursery Tales':

The lord rade,
And the foal slade;
He lighted
And he righted;
Set joint to joint,
And bone to bone,
Sinew to sinew.
Heal, in the Holy Ghost's Name.

'On one occasion,' said the present Oak, 'when my father was talking to me of the dress and manners of the people who passed by him on their way, he could not help dwelling on the improvement which had taken place even in his time. Formerly, he said, it was nakedness rather than clothing, and the manner of Kelt and Cymry, Saxon and Dane, was rough as the roughest. The roughest portion of my weather-beaten bark was not so rough as they were, and many's the time I have known them strip off long pieces of bark and use them to protect their legs in getting through the scrub.'

'It was pleasant to hear my venerable father,' continued the present Oak, 'discuss the subject of improved clothing and dress, for with it civilisation, he said, always advances, and the steps he had observed were from comparative nakedness to the skins of beasts fastened on with horns (gipsy-fashion), then twisted hair and knitted work, and afterwards, by the rude attempts of Joss, the weaver, a thick blue stuff, like the modern Icelandic *Vadmal*, and which, when you were a boy, and drove nails—stub nails—into my old trunk, was still worn, curiously tucked up, by old Sally Perks, a pensioner of the family and the last of her race!'

I was struck with the remark that *knit* works had the precedence of *woven* ones, not so much for its truth, because it would naturally occur to anyone, but because Lucretius had thought it worthy of remark in that still interesting sketch in his fifth book:

Nexilis ante fuit vestis, quam textile tegmen:
Textile post ferrum est; quia ferro tela paratur:
Nec ratione alia possunt tam lævia gigni
Insilia ac fusei; radiei, scapeique sonantes.

Joss, the weaver—Joice, I suppose, which is the same as Gotson or Goison—was a very curious old man whom I recollect, and only just, in my childhood—one who carried about all the ghost stories and tales of haunted houses throughout the country; indeed, he was *so funny*, and pulled such wry faces when he told his stories, that some said he was *fey*, and others that he was a conjuror. Whatever he was, he was a clever old fellow, tall and gaunt, and collected all the spinning in the country, and the sheeting he wove was such for durability as we shall never see again—something coarse, it must be admitted, but of healthy wear. How old Joss, if he could have understood them, would have delighted in the lines of Lucretius, which follow those above quoted, his great pleasure being always to *gird* the lasses:

> Et facere ante viros lanam natura coëgit,
> Quam muliebre genus; nam longe præstat in arte,
> Et solertius est multo, genus omne virile:
> Agricolæ donec vitio vortere severei;
> Ut muliebribus id manibus concedere vellent,
> Atque ipsei pariter durum subferre laborem,
> Atque opere in duro durarent membra, manusque.

It will readily be supposed that if the habits and manners of the country were so rough, all attempts at agriculture would be rough too, and so it was. For a long time the ground recovered from the waste and scrub, or from the forest, was only burnt and scarified, scrated and turned up by sharp hooks and iron bars, and when they improved upon these, the plough of these times was as useless as the *cachrom* or wooden ploughshare of Cantire, and their harrows were but *racans*—poor clodcrushers at the best. The plough, in Saxon times, had another name, *sull*, *sullow*, or *sowl* (A.-S. *sulh*), which it even yet bears in the West of England. *Ploh*, *plog*, or *plou*, was probably of later date; still, however, Saxon, and not Anglo-Norman. And yet it is curious to observe in the history of language how the latter name has taken its place, as it did soon in such compounds as *plow-ælmessa*, *plough-lands*, and *plough-shares*. All will recollect the fire ordeal, and how Emma, the Confessor Edward's mother, walked over the burning ploughshares unscathed and unhurt,

and not be disinclined to ask with honest old Fuller, 'Must innocence be ruined as often as malice would wrong it, if miracle would not rescue it? This was not a way to try man, but to tempt God: as just a trying by fire as that of our modern witches by water. This trial Queen Emma admirably underwent, not sensible of the ploughshares till past them, saying to such as led her, "Oh, when shall I come to the place of my purgation?"'

Connected with the plough and the produce of the earth was the preparation of it for food; 'and of this,' said my pleasant instructor, 'my aged father, first and last, said a good deal to me. In the days of his saplingship, I very well recollect his saying, little or no grain was grown in his locality; but by degrees, and as centuries rolled on, the supply became abundant. First there was the oat-cake; then the bere, or barley bread; and last of all, and on high-days and holidays, wheaten flour. He very well recollected the time when the women roasted the grain and then ground it, meal and bran together, between two stones, and he was advancing in oak-wood, he said, when the common every-day mill, or quern, was introduced.'

And I put on my thinking cap again, and observed at once how pretty much, in all ages, people had hit upon the same device, and after they had done roasting acorns they betook them to roasting corn. What prettier passage could one hastily light upon than that in the 'Fasti' of Ovid!

> Messis erat primis virides mortalibus herbæ,
> Quas tellus nullo sollicitante dabat:
> Et modo carpebant vivax e cespite gramen,
> Nunc epulæ tenera fronde cacumen erant.
> Postmodo glans nata est. Bene erat jam glande reperta:
> Duraque magnificas quercus habebat opes.
> Prima Ceres, homine ad meliora alimenta vocato,
> Mutavit glandes utiliore cibo.

With this should be connected another passage in an earlier book of the same work, the most interesting Ovid ever wrote, not excepting the 'Metamorphoses':

> Farra tamen veteres jaciebant, farra metebant:
> Primitias Cereri farra resecta dabant.

Usibus admoniti flammis torrenda dederunt :
Multaque peccato damna tulere suo.
Nam modo verrebant nigras pro farre favillas ;
Nunc ipsas ignes corripuere casas.
Facta dea est Fornax : læti Fornace coloni
Orant, ut fruges temperet illa suas.

As for the QUERN, or stone mill, that, under one name or another, has been used from the remotest antiquity. The Hebrew women ground at it, and wherever grain was to be found farther West, there the women used it too. Whether the name was pure Anglo-Saxon or not, the old Anglo-Saxon version of Matt. xviii. 6 and Luke xvii. 35 has, 'Twa beed at cwyrne grindende, &c.,' and all Londoners, first or last, will have heard tell of 'St. Michael le Querne,' or *ad Bladam*, where Leland the antiquary was buried, and Sir Thomas Browne, the philosopher of Norwich, baptised. The last complete quern I ever saw was in Perthshire in 1825 or 1826. Nares quotes from Boswell's 'Journey to the Hebrides' the passage following : 'We stopped at a little hut, where we saw an old woman grinding with the *quern*, an ancient Highland instrument which, it is said, was used by the Romans, but which, being very slow in its operation, is almost entirely gone into disuse.' The reader may see a very good description of a Roman quern from Pompeii in Rich's 'Dictionary of Roman and Grecian Antiquities,' under the word '*Mola*.'

Mr. John Phillips, in his 'Rivers, Mountains, and Sea Coast of Yorkshire,' says : 'The QUERN (a German name for the hand-mill of antiquity) might be cut from the millstone grit of Whernside and Quorn Moor near Lancaster ;' on which it is to be noted that this word for a mill runs through all the northern dialects—Icelandic, Danish, Swedish, German. In Pennant's time it took two pair of hands four hours to grind a bushel of corn.

Many years ago a peculiar sort of a quern was found at West Tarring, in the county of Sussex. Where it is now no one knows, but I recollect to have seen it in 1834 in the possession of an old man of the name of Briggs, leather-cutter and postmaster, and it appeared to me to have been turned by a handle like a grindstone. The passage following

from 'Glencraggan,' may serve as an illustration. The Scotch called the upper stone by the name of *braidh*—'a round stone with a hole through the centre, in which was fixed a handle. The grain was placed upon a flat stone, and the *braidh* was turned round upon it, so as to crush the grain.'

And this calls to my mind what my Talking Friend told me of his father's views on the progress of society within his recollection. Specially, he did not scruple to aver (a solemn shaking of his leaves always accompanied such remarks) that in his earlier days, contrary altogether to the spirit of a pure Saxon, slavery did exist and to a very great extent. In fact, he would add, a very large proportion of the Saxon population was in a state of slavery or thraldom—were bought and sold with the land, as so much stock and cattle. But, he would add, 'if I have seen much degradation and misery from my old tree-head, I have also seen many and great improvements; and however rough we may have been at our best estate, civilisation did advance, and that considerably, during the six, or about, Anglo-Saxon centuries.' And he would instance particularly the state of the female population, which under barbarism is always ground down as a sex; but let once the woman take her proper place, and you shall see what good results in a household, and then perceptibly, though by degrees, to the nation at large—a point, I believe,' added my pleasant friend, 'which you book-worms of modern days will readily acquiesce in and concede to; and if you will only use such evidence as you have, you will find that woman's position in society between the arrival of Hengist and Horsa (if such names were ever real) and the Norman Conquest was much greater than, on the first blush, you would be inclined to admit.'

I listened patiently to the good old tree, being, as General Foy said of Napoleon, a good listener; but, when I considered what was the state of *liberty* as late even as the days of good Queen Bess, I thought it must have been a very questionable commodity in Anglo-Saxon times, though the spirit of the race was certainly set towards liberty; and I bethought me of the words of Sharon Turner on this head. 'In talking,' says that able historian, 'of the Anglo-Saxon

freemen, we must not let our minds expatiate on an ideal character which eloquence and hope have invested with charms almost magical. No Utopian state, no paradise of such a pure republic as reason can conceive, but as human nature can neither establish or support, is about to shine around us when we describe the Anglo-Saxon freeman. A freeman among our ancestors was not that dignified, independent being, "lord of the lion heart and eagle eye," which our poets fancy under this appellation ; he was rather an Anglo-Saxon not in the servile state, not property attached to the land as the slaves were. He was freed from the oppression of arbitrary bondage ; he was often a servant, and a master, but he had the liberty to quit the service of one lord and choose another,' &c. &c. But I cannot afford space to pursue his remarks. The reader will do well to refer to them at his leisure, and to contrast with them what he says of slavery and serfdom. No Englishman can forget how formerly the serf was bought and sold, or fail to call to mind Pope Gregory and the market-place at Rome. In the words of Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle :

> Thus come, lo ! Cristendom agen into this londe
> Among the hethene Saxons, as ych under stonde.

And this it was, more than anything else, which really tended to liberty. For, as Sharon Turner says towards the end of the above-quoted chapter : 'If the mass of the Anglo-Saxon population had continued in this servile state, the progress of the nation in the improvements of society would have been very small. But a better destiny awaited them ; the custom of manumission began, and the diffusion of Christianity by mildly attempering the feelings of the individual, and by compelling him to cultivate acts of benevolence as a religious duty, overcame the prevalence of the practice.'

The more we study the early history of our own nation or of any other, this conclusion all candid reasoners will be sure to arrive at—that civilisation and humanity go hand in hand with the progress of true religion.

> Resistless, as the bright-man'd steeds
> That bear the Morn to disenthrone old Night.

And it is a striking passage in Professor Max Müller's 'Lectures on the Science of Language:' 'Humanity is a word which you look in vain for in Plato or Aristotle; the idea of mankind as one family, as the children of one God, is an idea of Christian growth; and the science of mankind, and of the languages of mankind, is a science which, without Christianity, would never have sprung into life. When people had been taught to look upon all men as brethren, then, and then only, did the variety of human speech present itself as a problem that called for a solution in the eyes of thoughtful observers; and I therefore date the real beginning of the science of language from the first Day of Pentecost. After that solemn day of cloven tongues a new light is spreading over the world, and objects rise into view which had been hidden from the eyes of the nations of antiquity.' What follows is highly interesting, and is easily connected with the subject in hand.

It is said of the jabiru, the *Mycteria australis*, or giant crane of New Holland: 'It may always be found in that part of the yard where the sun is shining, and with its face invariably towards it.' One might refer a people sitting in darkness, as were our Anglo-Saxon forefathers before the introduction of Christianity, to such a sight, and devoutly pray that they too would turn their faces towards the Sun of Righteousness!

Within two miles of the Old Oak's locality there were no less than three fords over the little river Rea, at Hanwood, Meole, and the Lea Cross, which in winter time during floods were dangerous; in summer days they were what an inhabitant of Norfolk would call *broads*, or the inhabitants of Paraguay, *pantanacos* or flooded savannahs, though *their* floods were at a different time of the year. Adjoining one of these a sort of foot-bridge—a long timber log with rough fastenings of twisted willow—had been thrown over the stream where it narrowed again, and 'close to it,' said my informant, 'is a reed and log apology for a dwelling; there lived for many years an old man, with a sort of sacred character, to whom passers-by gave toll for his support, as well they might, for he alone knew when the ford was to be passed and when the foot-bridge only was to be resorted to.'

And I said to myself, in days of Roman domination and power they would have dignified the aged man with the name of 'Pontifex.' Curious it is, and observable as pointing to benefits conferred on a community, that bridge-builders have been considered as a sacred class in Grecian and Roman records. Even Minerva, the Athenian Pallas, had her title Gephyritis. But this by the way, and to revert to our old warder of the Pons Sublicius on the Rea, and to the remarks (for he was a great observer) which he made upon the people, concurring with the observations of my Talking Friend's father.

It was upon an occasion when he had to come down from the Lea ford to the hamlet of Meole, that he observed to his old friend Cedric Wihtgils, a person of some repute in those parts for sobriety of character: 'We Saxons of later days have been very much maligned for our sottishness, guzzling, and gormandising. Rough we are, most of us, and rough we were; but a great deal has been laid to our score which belonged to the Danes. May I find fewer robins' cushions year by year to form my pillow, and help my rest, if I speak not the truth!—at all events, if we did make a good meal when we could get one, which was not every day, it was the fierce Viking and the roystering Dane (few there were of them, however, thanks to Woden, in these parts) who introduced the drunkenness and revelry, or, as they called it, the *rouse*, which has stained our name.'

'This conversation and others of the same sort, for the old bridge-warder and Cedric Wihtgils often met,' said the present Oak's father, 'I heard as they sat for shade beneath my branches, and I was very much of the same opinion. We were never so rough as has been represented; and although for many a year we used the language of our forefathers, which was sometimes coarse (you have just heard that the warder on the "Rea" retained the name of *Woden* in unreserved and friendly talk, though he was known to be a true Christian), we were not the rude, uncultivated, borrel folk, the spiteful Norman wishes to make us out. Long before he came in with his lordly contumely, there was much happy domestic life in our clearings, and the inner happiness of many a Saxon hearth might have humbled his pride.'

Recent discoveries and the closer study of Anglo-Saxon history, with fresh documentary evidence, have certainly tended to strengthen this view of the case; neither were their laws those of a commonplace people at all. However much slavery abounded, there were in them the rudiments of such liberty as every true-born Englishman looks to with a proper pride and boasting.

The reader of the 'Mirror of Magistrates,' a book still worth reading by all lovers of old English literature, will recollect how the Lady Ebba says:

> These dreadful Danes they had no fear of God,
> But savage, they did make their lust a lawe,
> Whom God did send for an avenging rod,
> To make us Saxons live in fear and awe
> Of Him, Who did from servile bondage draw
> Us out, and make us live at libertie,
> When as we served with cruel slaverie.

No doubt there were those converted to Christianity, and constrained through grace given to lead Christian lives, who thought thus with the Lady Abbesse of Coldingham. Plenty, too, thought with the old warder of the bridge on the Rea; certainly there was no love lost betwixt Saxon, Dane, or Norman. If the ancient Briton utterly disliked the former as an intruder, the Saxon's abhorrence of the latter was unmitigated for a long period of years. It was not with his goodwill that either one or the other was admitted to *heah-setl*—high seat—or board. Let the Dane stick to his swilling-bench, and the Norman to his daïs—he would have none of them!

The very general opinion as to the *hard eating* of the Anglo-Saxons is, perhaps, pretty much reduced when we consider their *hard fare*. Under any circumstance it was quantity they required. And if, as late as 1723, 'the tenants of Kirkcudbright lived very meanly on kail, groats, milk, ground in querns turned by the hand, the grain being dried in a pot, together with a crock ewe,[1] as a luxury, 'about Martinmas,' one may, without any great injury done, suppose the Saxon's board to have been meanly enough even if abundantly stored. Without going so far back as good old Tusser's 'Five Hundred Points of Husbandry'—who says:

[1] A ewe that has given over bearing.

And Martinmass beef doth ben good tacke,
When country folke do dainties lacke—

there are those yet living who quite well recollect the small farmers on the confines of Wales laying in their winter store, and who never tasted fresh meat again till spring was far advanced. As for any wild fanatics who might have been for denying them *groaty* pudding, or

For abolishing black pudding,
And eating nothing with the blood in,

they would have put them down as very simple people indeed, quite unworthy of a chance rabbit or hare wherewith to season their broths, as the Swedes to this day give point to their *svart-suppe* with plums and goose-blood. But, as Molesworth said in his yet interesting work: in the present day what is not French in their cuisine would hardly suit an Englishman, though the cheer is bountiful. 'En general leur maniere de faire la cuisine plairoit difficilement à un Anglois.'

As for the love of drinking and the *rouse*, that certainly in its excess came on in later days; and what old Lambarde said in his 'Perambulation of Kent' is pretty much to the purpose. 'Before the arrival of these Danes the Englishmen (or Saxons) used some temperance in drinking, not taking thereof largely, but only at certain great feasts and cheerings, and that in the one only wassailing cup (or bolle, i.e. *bowl*), which walked round about the board at the midst of the meal. But now, after the coming of the Danes, and after such time as King Edgar had permitted them to inhabit here and to have conversation with his own people, quaffing and carousing so increased,' &c. &c. But, as hinted at before, to *hold the rouse* became the common term; and the blood of the Dane has showed itself in later days when there were *four-bottle* men, and when *heel-taps* were looked upon as a moral delinquency.

I read somewhere that 'the name for day in Chinese is *gi-tse*, which means originally son of the sun.' Till the Ἀνατολή—the East, the Bright Morning Star, the Sun of Righteousness—dawn upon a people sitting in darkness, how little is it that they advance!

CHAPTER VII.

THE OLD OAK'S RECOLLECTIONS OF THE SAXONS.

In tyme, that Vortiger reyned riche,
Three schipes aryved at Sandwiche,
With fare folk and wale dight.
Hengiste and Hors the maistres hight,
Of faire stature withouten lak,
And a salcouthe spech thei spak.

ROBERT OF BRUNNE'S *Chronicle*, Hearne.

Duces fuisse perhibentur eorum primi duo fratres Hengist et Horsa. . . . Non mora ergo confluentibus certatim in insulam gentium memoratarum catervis, grandescere populis cœpit advenarum, ita ut ipsis quoque qui eos advocaverant indigenis essent terrori.—BEDE, *Hist. Eccles. Gentis Anglorum*, lib. i. xv.

I dread a peaceful Saxon, 't is too rare,
Prodigious and unnatural, like a star
Seen in the noonday.

SAMOR, *Lord of the Bright City*, Book IV.

THE thickening troubles of the Roman Empire compelled the conquerors of the world to evacuate Britain—not at once, but within a few years of their legions' first recall. The dates inclusive A.D. 409 and A.D. 420—when Gallio of Ravenna, having repaired the wall of Severus, told them that there was no hope for further assistance from Rome—will be head enough for a general reader. The miserable estate of the Britons after this must be picked up from Bede and such other authorities as our historians have collected together. The remarkable point is, that they who were so ready to drive back the original invaders, should now be as ready to call them in afresh to their assistance against the fierce incursions of the Picts and Scots.

Twice, in their great distress, did they supplicate Rome, but she had already too much on her hands. The appeal to Ætius, then prefect of Gaul, must be given (it was their last

appeal) in the words of Venerable Bede: 'Ætio ter consuli gemitus Britannorum!—To Ætius, thrice consul, the groans of the Britons! The barbarians drive us to the sea; the sea drives us back to the barbarians; between them we are exposed to two sorts of death—we are either butchered or drowned!' Nor yet could an appeal like this avail to procure from him any aid, inasmuch as he was at that time engaged in the most dangerous wars with Bleda and Attila, kings of the Huns. And although in the year next before this, Bleda had been slain by the treachery of his brother Attila, yet Attila himself continued to be such an intolerable enemy, that he ate out the heart of Central Europe, her cities and strongholds being invaded and levelled with the ground. Such, clearly, was not a time when the Britons, in their distress, were likely to be heard.

Shortly after this it was reported generally that the Picts and the Scots, who up to this time had been rather engaged in raids and marauding expeditions, were about to invade the south of Britain and to take possession. Upon this, as the story goes, the Britons were overwhelmed with dismay, and a council of war was held, with Vortigern, King of the Silures, at the head of it. Whether he wanted courage, whether he was a traitor, or whether he thought it the best thing that could be done in their present necessity, it was agreed to call in the assistance of the Saxons. This was in A.D. 449, and in the whole account we have illustrated once more the apologue of the horse's calling in the assistance of man to help him in his attack upon the stag. The Britons, in fact, only did over again what Stesichorus warned the inhabitants of Himera not to do, when they were appointing a life-guard for Phalaris their general.

> Cervus equum pugna melior communibus herbis
> Pellebat, donec minor in certamine longo
> Imploravit opes hominis, frænumque recepit:
> Sed postquam victor violens discessit ab hoste,
> Non equitem dorso, non frænum depulit ore.

But to pass on to the arrival of the Saxons, which shall be given in the words of the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,' and from Thorpe's translation.

'A.D. 449. In this year Marcian and Valentinian &c., and in their days Wyrtgeorn (Vortigern) invited the Angle race hither, and they then came in three ships hither to Britain, at the place named Heopwines Fleet . . . against them. King Wyrtgeorn gave them land in the south-east of this land, on condition that they should fight against the Picts. They then fought against the Picts, and had victory whithersoever they came. They then sent to the Angles, bade them send greater aid, bade them be told of the worthlessness (A.-S. *nahtnesse*, Bor. Land *nahtscipe*) of the Brito-Welsh, and the excellencies of the land. They then forthwith sent hither a larger army in aid of the others. Then came men from the three tribes of Germany: from the Old Saxons, from the Angles, from the Jutes. From the Jutes came the Kentish people, and the people of Wight—that is, the tribe which now dwells in Wight, and the race among the West Saxons which is yet called the Jute race. From the Old Saxons came the East Saxons, and South Saxons, and West Saxons. From Angeln, which has ever since stood waste betwixt the Jutes and Saxons, came the East Anglians, the Middle Anglians, the Mercians, and all the Northumbrians. Their leaders were two brothers, Hengist and Horsa. They were sons of Wihtgils, Wihtgils was the son of Witta, Witta of Wecta, Wecta of Woden. From Woden sprang all our royal kin, and the Southumbrians also.'

Leaving this for the further consideration of critics and historians, I have now to pass on to the Old Oak's recollections of the Saxons, which are of a very mixed kind; but as my Talking Friend, his son, said, he had a pleasure in *ransacking*—shaking up and cleaning the sack of—old recollections; for although his views were in advance, he was something of an antiquary in his way, and would explain many things which others had forgotten.

'From my earliest years,' said the present Oak, 'I can recollect my venerable father's defending the Britons, for although he had fallen in with the Saxons, and even adopted, as a tree might, their views and habits, especially after the introduction of Christianity, yet would he maintain that the ancient Britons were a fine old race. The Saxon, he said,

might speak scornfully of their naughtiness ('Sax. Chron.' *nahtnesse*), but they nevertheless held their own well for a long time, and were only overwhelmed at last by swarms of Saxons, Jutes, and Angles, and, sad to say, by their own intestinal divisions! More than once, if I recollect aright, he seemed to imply that SAXON was rather a British word of contempt, but it came into general use, and he used the term as others did. There was one, Eliseg, of whom he used to speak in terms of high satisfaction as of a brave man and a true, who had recovered the inheritance of his fathers out of the hands of the spoilers, defending to the last the possessions of Powisland.'

And I called to mind how, in my boyish days, with a fishing basket slung across my shoulders, and rod in hand, I had passed the old column of Eliseg, close to the turnpike road leading by Valle Crucis Abbey from Llangollen to Ruthin, where it had been set up in its broken state by Mr. Lloyd, of Trevor Hall, in 1779, and how I heard it was thrown down during the civil wars and broken into two pieces. In the words of the historian of Shrewsbury, 'one, almost the only legible line of the inscription on the pillar of Eliseg (sixth descendant of Brockwell Yscithrog), near the abbey of Valle Crucis, informs us that "this is that Eliseg who recovered his inheritance of Powis by his sword from the power of the Angles." Some one of his ancestors, then, had lost it, and he had regained it. But this is all we know.'

By the by, I should remark here, that as far as I could make out from what my Talking Friend reported to me of his old father's conversations, he must have understood the ancient British, the Latin, and the Saxon tongues. At least, nothing said under his branches was unknown to him. But perhaps this was the way in his, as it was in Æsop's, days, and trees and animals may have a quickness of apprehension which does not belong to us who learn a language patiently by letters, syllables, and words!

Upon one occasion I quite recollect my Talking Friend's telling me that the old oak warned some Saxons beneath his shade by the words, 'Nimeth eowre saxas,' that is, 'Take your daggers'—the short skeines which they wore under their

long cassocks, what we should now call *smock-frocks*, the last remnant, possibly, of the Roman toga.

'It constantly happened that the manumitted serf,' said my Talking Friend, 'found his way under the old tree, my father, and he was *free* and *færewyrd*—that is to say, free and fareworthy, or with the right to go where he would—and he would often tell how kind his lord had been to him.'

This point has been adverted to before, but we who live in a land of freedom must never forget that slavery existed here formerly to a very great extent, and although there were plenty of kind masters, as there were in the West Indies previous to the emancipation of the negro, yet was the state of things a very great evil, and the serfs of those days were probably little better off than the Russian serf in the days of the Czar Peter. It would surprise many a person to hear it asserted that most of our great towns—London and York, Bath and Winchester, Chichester and Ely, Gloucester and Bristol—had their regular slave markets. Yet is it very probable that they had, and that as fair slaves might have been seen there as Gregory saw at Rome. And not only so, but the old Hebrew and Assyrian custom was not unknown also; for, not only was the malefactor condemned to penal servitude, but his wife, and his children, and all his belongings. One can see the poor fellow rushing into his *tûn*, or cultivated inclosure, to escape the hands of his pursuers; then through the *geát* into the inclosed court; and, as a last resource, pulling up the *hlid-gata*—his door with a lid or cover to it—against them. Even to this day anyone who should visit the old farmhouse at Horsted Keynes, in Sussex, which gave shelter to Archbishop Leighton, whose grave and tomb are there, may see an instance of the old Anglo-Saxon *hlid-gata*, though it is comparatively of recent date, only showing what the custom of our forefathers was, and how much they needed protection.

'Upon an occasion,' said my Talking Friend, 'old Sebald Fenn had gone out to gather woad on a clearing by the brook between Meole and Newnham'—woad, good reader, was to the ancient Britons and the Saxons no mean plant,

but like the orhota, or *Panax quinquefolium*, of the Manchousian forests, which the Chinese call the first of all plants—'and on his way he met with a man in great distress, who said he was a *freeman*, Withar Heremod by name, journeying towards Minsterley; and old Sebald Fenn said, "If I, whom they call rustic and hog-rubber, had not given him food, he had gone dead to a certainty; he could hardly drag one leg after another for weakness."'

Years ago I should have been surprised at this poor *freeman's* pitiable estate; but latterly I had seen cause to fall in with Sharon Turner's view, that the unprovided-for poor of the Anglo-Saxons must have been chiefly of the free. The vassal peasantry of the great and the clergy had their masters to depend upon or relieve them; but when the freemen were destitute their situation must have been deplorable. Jealously suspected and pursued by the laws, if they wandered to seek or solicit subsistence, they had no resource, if they did not join armies, or become minstrels or jugglers, or be enlisted as retainers in the service of the great, but to engage as servants to burghers and others, or to become robbers, outlaws, and foresters. Poor freemen are several times noticed in 'Domesday.'

In passing on to other notices, I recollect how old George Long, the clerk, said with much feeling when he heard of trouble in a much respected household: 'There must be poor gentlemen as well as other poor!' George's every-day occupation was that of a *leacward* or gardener, and none knew more of *leeks*, house-*leeks*, and gar-*leek*, than he did; or of what his Saxon forefathers would have called the *wyrt-tûn* or the *wyrt-gaard*, by us called the garden. Scholars would derive orchard, Milton's 'orchat,' from ὄρχατος. George, not being a scholar, but a South Saxon, took it from their usage of *ore* or *ort*, a word common amongst the Scandinavians also, and from whom some have thought that the English drew their pluck, and dash, and freedom; and no doubt their blood, and the Vikingur's blood, and the blood of Rolf or Rollo, identified by Mr. Thorpe with *Hrôlfgavngr*, a son of Rögavald, jarl of Mœri in Norway, does circulate hastily in our veins when our tempers are tried, and

we are ready, like the Celts, to take up arms against the waves:

> Such joys of old
> Lured the fierce Saxon from his darksome woods
> To launch along the vast and barren sea.

One of the nights of what we call 'THE YEAR' in which all distinctions seem to have been forgotten, and Horace's words literally taken, as though every nation was necessitated to have its Saturnalia—

> Age, libertate Decembri
> (Quando ita majores voluerunt) utere—

one of these nights was the 'JULE' or Christmas night, looked to continually, as children of the present day still look forward to that happy time—a time not to be proscribed notwithstanding our waywardnesses—but to be kept as it has been and will be kept, after old Tusser's words:

> At Christmas play and make good cheer,
> For Christmas comes but once a year.

Whence came the name of Yule for Christmas will serve etymologists for discussion as long, probably, as Yule lasts; but with slight diversity of spelling it is Saxon and it is Scandinavian. The Scandinavians claim it as derived from Jiolner, one of the names of Thor, and certainly it was at a Yule-feast, held at mid-winter, that King Halfdan the Black's food was snatched from before his eyes. Let us take down the folio 'Heimskringla,' and read how it came about in Mr. Laing's version: 'King Halfdan was at a Yule-feast in Hadaland, where a wonderful thing happened one Yule evening. When the great number of guests assembled were going to sit down to table, all the meat and all the liquors disappeared from the table. The king sat alone, very confused in mind; all the others set off, each to his home, in consternation. That the king might come to some certainty about what had occasioned this event, he ordered a Laplander to be seized, who was particularly knowing, and tried to force him to disclose the truth; but, however much he tortured the man, he got nothing out of him. The Laplander sought help particularly from Harold the king's son, and Harold begged

for mercy for him; but in vain. Then Harold let him escape against the king's will, and accompanied the man himself. On their journey they came to a place where the man's chief had a great feast, and it appears they were well received there. When they had been there until spring the chief said, "Thy father took it much amiss that in winter I took some provisions from him; now I will repay it unto thee with a joyful piece of news: thy father is dead; and now thou shalt return home, and take possession of the whole kingdom which he had, and with it thou shalt lay the whole kingdom of Norway under thee." Such is the story in the Saga, and amongst all the northern nations the Yule-feast holds its place.'

These remarks were called to my mind by my Talking Friend's telling me that his old father always referred to the *Yule* night as the blithest one of the year; and he would add with native humour, 'The Yule log to be burnt on Christmas Eve was never cut from our stock, but from the birch or the ash. Thanks to the old Druids, we oaks were safe.'

'It was at one of these feasts,' he would add, 'when there was a great gathering, like a wake, at Posentesburh,' i.e. the present Pontesbury, 'that Ella Eamer, the great beauty of the oak, was carried off by Evan Gryffyth, the Welshman. Year after year he had come down with his thick blue cloth dress and his panniers; sometimes bringing mussels and crabs and lobsters from Machynlleth and Towyn; and at other times, such goods as he could pick up at Abergele and Conway. More than once he brought some *beasts* with him from the latter place; and although they were shown to his customers, they were never sold, but always on his departure were found in the beautiful Ella's possession. This went on for three or four years, and Evan never left the country without leaving something for her. But it was the old story over again—the course of their loves did not run smooth. Evan came from afar off—seemed to have no settled home—and the Cymry, or the ancient Britons, were a wild race, though he, to all appearance, was not so; for, having travelled, he could frame his speech in Saxon, and evidently

had said things to the lovely Ella which had taken captive her heart. Formerly, she was the blithest girl by the Rea-side, and when the May came round she was sure to have the bonniest chaplet that could be wove of daisies and buttercups, and harebells and the wild anemone, whose gracefulness she rivalled. Latterly, however, she was either pensive and silent, or else unnaturally wild in her demeanour, and the people could not make her out; and as they passed beneath my old branches, one said one thing and one another; but all agreed that Ella Eamer was not herself. Time, however, which like the tide, as shipmen say, waits for no man, passed on, and the Yule-feast came round again, and the gathering at Posentesburh. To this Ella went, and from thence she did not return with the neighbours, and all that they could tell was, that the last time they saw her was in the company of Evan Gryffyth, who had come there in his old dress and in his old character.

'Years passed by, and not a word was heard either of Ella or Evan Gryffyth; and Time, the great healer of sores, had done his work for the parents she had left behind. Sometimes the old sore would ache and smart, but on the whole they had a happy household, for Fredulf their son had married to their hearts' content; and his two sons, Arthur and Geortimer, were the pride of the place. Great helpers were they in tilling the land and clearing the brush, and if there was a fox or a badger to be trapped, or a speckled trout to be caught in the Rea, their hands never lost their cunning. Broths of boys were they,' continued the Old Oak, using that old laudatory Saxon term; 'and it was my delight to hear them tell their tales as they sat upon my time-worn roots.

'Looking to the age of these boys, it must have been fifteen or sixteen years since Ella's disappearance. It was a bright midsummer's day, and they had been up the brook as far as Lea and Hinton, in pursuit of an otter who had seriously interfered with their fishing, for he contrived to catch the best fish in the Rea, and, as otters use when not pressed with hunger, would only eat the best parts, such as the head, shoulder, and the fleshy part of the back as far as the dorsal fin,[1] leaving the rest on a sandbank or on the gravel.

[1] 'The havock which it makes amongst the finny inhabitants is almost in-

And great was the glee of the youths, for by the help of their dogs they had caught their enemy, the largest they had ever seen, no less than two feet six inches in length, with a perfect skin, and the most wonderful whiskers.

'The boys were on their way home, themselves proud of their burden, and the dogs as proud of their day's work. They had passed the Cross, which in early Christian days had been set up on the old Roman road by the Rea, and were close upon a by-path which in those days led up to an out-of-the-way spot, called Shorthill, when all at once they were accosted by a thin careworn woman—as beautiful as thin—accompanied by two girls very like herself, and apparently much of their own age. At once the elder woman accosted them, and asked, unsuspiciously, after the old Eamers. The boys—even the dead otter, so grand a prize, was forgotten for the moment—in one breath declared they were their grandchildren, and that they were alive and well, though not so strong as they used to be. To hear this seemed to be a relief to the wayfarer, and tears ran down her cheeks, and she sat her down beneath a tree, as if to rest. After a while—the boys still stood by the two girls—the mother asked them to hasten home, and to say to the old people, that one long lost and full of trouble, and weary and footsore, was coming to seek for

credible. In feeding it holds the fish between its fore-paws, eating first the head, and then downwards to the vent, leaving the tail. But it is not only to those which are necessary for its sustenance that its ravages are restricted; for, as honest Izaak Walton says very truly, "The otter devours much fish, and kills and spoils much more than he eats."'—BELL'S *Quadrupeds*, 'Otter.'

What is mentioned in the text I have observed. I add the following note on an 'Otter Fight:'

'Notwithstanding the shyness of the otter, this animal is very determined in the defence of its young ones, and boldly confronts a person who takes one of them up. My keeper tells me that he has seen an old otter feeding her young with fish. The two young ones were sitting on a flat stone at the edge of the burn when their parent brought them a good-sized trout; they immediately both seized the fish, pulling and tearing at it like two bull-dog puppies. At last they came to a pitched battle with each other, biting, squealing, and tugging, and leaving the trout to its fate. On this the old one interfered, and making them quiet gave the trout to one of them as his own. The other young one, on seeing the parent do this, no longer interfered, but sat quietly looking on till the old otter (who in the meantime had renewed her fishing) came back with a large trout for it also.' —CLARKE ST. JOHN'S *Natural History and Sport in Moray*, Feb., p. 31.

shelter and forgiveness! A moment's hesitation, as if a light suddenly shone upon them, and the boys were gone. Oddly enough, a very old dog, too old to go with the youths, but who had come that far to meet them on their return, lingered behind and smelt about the poor woman, and at last uttered a plaintive whine, and put his wet nose into her hand. And she wept again, as she said, "Wolf! poor Wolf! I did not think that you would have been alive, much less that you should recognise me!"

'The boys were soon at home—could not find time to recount the exciting history of the past, but said at once to their mother, who was keeping house, that a strange woman, and two girls much of their own age, were seeking for the house of grandfather and grandmother, "and she knows her way, and all about the country too." Woman's wit immediately came to the help of their mother, and she exclaimed with emotion, "It is surely Ella! poor lost Ella!" and she hastened to the house of the aged people hard by.

'She soon told her suspicions to the elders on the Rea-side, and all natural affection revived at once; and they trudged off in haste to seek their lost one. Nor were they long before they met the little party, and, strange to say, Wolf at the head of them, never leaving them, and looking up every now and then into the woman's face, as faithful dogs only know how to look up.

'All the past was forgotten in a moment. "My daughter! my child! my long, long-lost child!" were the poor mother's words, as she fainted and fell to the ground. But her aged husband, bent like a willow, and with hair white as the driven snow, soon picked her up, saying in sorrow, not in anger, "How *could* you have deserted us? And had you the heart, Ella, Ella, our beloved one, to have left us so long? We never thought to have seen thy face more. And these—who are these, with their soft blue eyes and features—just like thy mother's when she was their age? They must be thy children, and, with thee, they are come to receive our blessing. The good priest of Hanwood told us still to be patient, and to bide God's own good time, and his brother, Elfrith of Pontesbury, chimed in with him, and they have been a blessing to

us and a comfort. They said we must forgive as we hoped to be forgiven, and thy pardon has passed thy mother's lips and mine many a long day ago, and we hope that thou hast asked pardon of Heaven, and that thy pardon is sealed there!" And then, in his turn, the old man wept, and, I suppose, Oak as I am, of hardened trunk and wrinkled bark, there must have been joy in those tears!

'And then, by-and-by, when grief had had its course, then came the questioning. "Where is Evan? Is he alive? He could never have deserted his Ella, worthless though we thought him, and disapproved of his suit." And the poor widowed thing made answer, "No, not unloved; not deserted. And he would have let you know all about it many and many a time had it been in his power. Did Gwyllim ap Meredith never bring our tokens?" "We have never seen his face," the old people replied. "Then, like Evan, must he too be dead," exclaimed the poor woman, "for he was faithful and true always, and although his race did not love the Saxon, he was my husband's cousin and dearly loved us."

'The rest of her tale was simply told. Evan Gryffyth was a trader with the Danes, who used to frequent places now called Towyn, Barmouth, Dolgelly, and Aberdaron. Shortly after his arrival with Ella at Towyn, one of those wild Vikingur vessels touched there, and Evan was persuaded to take a cruise with his newly married wife. The voyage was to combine pleasure and business, but the business did not prosper, and the pleasure came to nothing. As the large pike in the Rea eat up the small ones, so was it with these vessels—the one preyed upon the other. So, instead of presently returning, the one in which he and his wife embarked was pursued by a larger one, and they had to run for their lives. How they got there, I, as an Oak, can't say, but they did get to Bergen, where they remained for awhile; after that they left for Jutland, and were some time at what is now called Aalborg. Thence they traded at Arcona and Höfn—what you now call Copenhagen—and there poor Evan died, leaving his wife with one child and another close at hand. The youngest—I always loved that child, and shook off my brightest and largest acorns so as just to fall at her feet—was

born at Heligoland. The Danish trader had, on his voyagings, to go there, and there he dropped her, as he thought, on her way home. But many and long a day was it before she reached that home. Years, indeed, she remained there, till she became as used to it as a second home, and met with no small kindness among a very rough people, whose chief occupation seemed to be the collection of plunder at the storm-tossed mouths of the Elbe and the Weser. Still, the banks of the Rea, and its speckled trout, old Pontesford Hill and the Stiperstones, would rise up before her, and she longed for the old homestead of Meole, and for the sight of her parents' faces, if so be she might crave their forgiveness on her knees and find it.

'Many a time would her host, Harold Björn, have made her his wife, but she always declined the offer; and half-trader, half-pirate, and whole Viking as he was, his wildness always relented in her presence, and it was hard to say whether he was most devoted to her or to her children. Hard as it was to part with her, he determined, if possible, to land her on her own shore. Little was it that he and his men knew of England, but from time immemorial a sort of trade was carried on with the Orkney Isles, and thither Björn determined to deposit his fair charge, who so longed for her home. It took some time to get together their small cargo, but at last it was completed, and a weary long while it seemed to poor Ella and her children before they sighted what her Norwegian friend Harold called Hrossey and Kirkinvog—a longer time, probably, than it would now take to reach America, or Vinland, as Björn would have called it. Reach it, however, they did at last, and to Harold's great delight he found living his own old friend, Tostvig Ork. To his care, with her small treasures, and with some links of gold (which now sorely puzzle antiquaries, but were then a sort of current coin) of his own, the grand Norwegian Viking—half-trader, half-pirate, as I said before—committed Ella and her children. Tostvig promised, one day or another, to start them on their way to the land of the Cymry, with which and the Orkneys, Shetland Isles, and Norway, there existed a very early trade; the very trade, in fact, which had brought Evan Gryffyth in

connection with the Northmen. However she got home from them I never rightly made out, but she said she stayed some time at two islands called Maen, or Moen, or Môn, which I rather suppose to be the more modern isles of Man and Anglesey, and that thence she made her way to *Caer Gyfin*, the modern Conway or Aberconway, and so on to *Ceastre*, or your Chester, when she got entirely wrong; and how she got to the place where the lads met her she never knew. She had wandered for a month or more in a cross-country direction, clean and quite out of the way, and it was by the mention of Pengwern and Scrobbesbyrig that she was at last put right. One thing she never ceased to mention with gratitude, which was the kindness shown to herself and her children. None of the Cymry said contemptuously, "*Dim Sassenach*" to her!

'The end of the story,' continued my Talking Friend, 'which my time-honoured father so delighted to recount, was this. Ella, the beloved in her youth, was the beloved in her age; and having sought and found forgiveness for the past, was the comfort and support of her aged parents, and the delight of her brother and of his boys. As for the aged priests of Pontesbury and Hanwood, they never ceased to dwell upon the things which God had wrought; and of all the women in the vale, the widowed Ella and her two daughters, Ella and Minna, were those who helped them most to civilise and to teach the ignorant. Never were these good men more delighted than when it transpired that the girls were to marry their cousins. And thus, if Ella's own love had not run true, that of her children did. And my aged father used to say that there were those of the name of Eamer still remaining about the old locality as late as the time of King John.'

Such was the Old Oak's story, and my Talking Friend recounted it with visible pleasure, and as he came to the end there was a soft rustling of his leaves, no wind blowing at the time, which showed how he was inwardly moved. And I thought he wished not to show a weakness, for he asked me, in somewhat too jocose a style, as I thought, for his years, 'if I had not noted since I was a boy an old crab tree, which

overhung the little runlet on the other side the Montgomery road, not far from which was the spot where his aged father stood for centuries.' To which he added, 'It has leant that way these seventy winters full, as though the next gale from Habberly Hill would level it with the ground, and so it still leans. One would hardly have thought there could have been such tenacity of life and endurance in a crab tree! And, mark me!' he continued, 'no old-fashioned homestead was ever without one from Saxon times downwards till the present century, when your new-fangled foreign acids have displaced (and to no good) the verjuice, or crab juice, on which the old people placed the most implicit faith.'

And he said no more, but left me to my dreams, in which I seemed to jumble together the lines of old Tusser, in his January's 'Husbandry,' with a vivid one of the recollection of verjuice in my childhood.

> Take verjuice and heat it, a pint for a cow,
> Bay salt, a handful, to rub tongue ye wot how:
> That done, with the salt, let her drink off the rest,
> This many times raiseth the feeble up beast.

Another night of great note amongst our Saxon forefathers, as indeed amongst all the Northern nations, was June 24, or the Festival of St. John the Baptist. On this night it was supposed that all the host of the unseen world was especially powerful, and therefore to be propitiated. So much, even after the introduction of Christianity, was superstition mixed up with true religion that Bede's words are none too strong: 'Nam et multi fidem quam habebant iniquis profanabant operibus; et aliqui etiam tempore mortalitatis, neglectis fidei sacramentis quibus erant imbuti, ad erratica idolatriæ medicamina concurrebant; quasi missam a Deo conditore plagam, per incantationes, vel phylacteria, vel alia quælibet dæmoniacæ artis arcana cohibere valerent;'[1] that is to say, 'Many profaned by their wicked actions the faith which they had received; and some also, in the time of a mortality, neglecting the sacraments of their faith which they had received, had recourse to the false remedies of idolatry, as if by enchantments, spells, or other secrets of the hellish art they could have put a stop to the plague sent from God.'

'Many a time,' said the Old Oak, 'had there been windows, such as you have now, instead of our old *eag-thyrl* and *eag-durn*, might the lookers-out have seen strange sights, and the good woman of the house, whom we were used to call the *freadowebbe*, or *weaver of peace*, would have had no little ado to hold in a new eager convert from pulling down the sacred pole, together with its flowers, and its ribbons, and garlands. Well enough knew she why fires were lighted at midnight—they were but a remnant of the old fire ordeal, and that was heathenism—and had the pouches of those who leapt over the fires been searched, no doubt there would have been found upon their persons, fern seed, and rue, and vervain —orpine, perhaps—moulded into "Midsummer men"; portions of the wych elm, certainly; and not improbably the *Gleinen Nadræth*, or those powerful snake rings or snake stones, which whosoever possessed was safe and sure to prosper. Of these,' said the Old Oak, 'the Druids knew most, but they continued to be very precious till quite a recent date, and Gammel Olger of Phaley always had several in his possession. He was used to accompany those who watched and fasted the Midsummer Night at the old Minster from which your modern Minsterley takes its name; for that is the night on which, as you know, all who are to die within the year knock in rotation at the church door after midnight. Olger's snake rings, on these occasions, were looked upon as a certain sure safeguard, and he had his fees.' To which he added, 'There were Midsummer feasts, as there were Yule feasts, and although at this time there was much joy and frolic, yet was there often an intermixture of solemn sadness, as if some of the party over-night had seen more than they wished. But, by degrees, as they finished what was on their bread-trenchers, and emptied off their Saxon drinking-cups—as they were obliged to do, for they were what you might call *tumblers*, and would not stand—the pleasantness of the Midsummer's Day returned, and it was a very enjoyable time.'

And I recollected, as I heard these words, how old-fashioned people, even in my boyhood, turned their tea-cups topsy-turvey when they had done; and calling to mind the *tranchoirs*, or *trenchers*, of secondary bread on which the meat

was put, and which soaked up the gravy, I bethought me of one, long departed in peace, who always had his cheese toasted *on* the bread, constantly affirming that this was the only way to get it in perfection. The schoolboy will presently recollect the words of Iulus, and the fulfilment of the oracle!

Heus! etiam mensas consumimus, inquit Iulus!

It is hardly necessary to say that many of the superstitions above alluded to, if they do not yet exist, as some of them certainly do, were yet common enough within the memory of man. As regards the Midsummer Night's fires—whether Baaltane, Baltane, or Bonefire—it is scarce sixty years since Scotland and Ireland, Westmoreland and Cumberland, might have been quoted in corroboration of Naogeorgus' words in his 'Regnum Papisticum':

Inde diem magni Baptistæ solstitium fert,
Omnibus ex vicis qua vulgo accenditur ignis,
Inque foro atque viis, lætas circumque choreas
Solliciti ducunt juvenes, cupidæque puellæ,
Verbenis cincti, &c., &c.

As for Denmark, to this day, than Midsummer Eve there is no more notable night throughout the year, and I can well recollect the 'krantz' and the garlands that were collected by an old Bönde at Fredericksdall for our inspection. To have doubted that the elves had their way that night would have stamped one as a Pyrrhonist at once. Did not Hans Delke hear them beneath the Elve Hoi? Such soft tones were never heard beneath Cæsar's plane-tree at Corduba!

Sæpe sub hac madidi luserunt arbore Fauni,
Terruit et tacitam fistula sera domum.

I do not know whether or not the St. John's wort is still connected in England with the superstitions of our forefathers, as it yet is in Scandinavia. The old idea was that when plucked on this night and placed on a damp wall, it would long retain its verdure, and the maiden would win her suitor; but that if it suddenly pined away and withered, so would she within the year. In this we see the same superstitious notion as in the Church-wake on St. John's Night. Many years ago

I read the following very touching lines, and if I recollect aright, they were said to be translated from some German almanack. As connected with old Saxon reminiscences, the reader may like to peruse them, or their own essential beauty may have its silent charm and influence. Perhaps it may be necessary to observe that *Johanniswurm* is the German for glowworm.

THE ST. JOHN'S WORT.

The young maid stole through the cottage door,
And blushed as she sought the plant of power :
'Thou silver glowworm, O lend me thy light !
I must gather the mystic St. John's wort to-night,
The wonderful herb, whose leaf will decide
If the coming year shall make me a bride.'

And the glowworm came
With its silvery flame,
And sparkled and shone
Through the night of St. John,
And soon has the young maid her love-knot tied.

With noiseless tread
To her chamber she sped,
Where the spectral moon her white beams shed :
'Bloom here, bloom here, thou plant of power,
To deck the young bride in her bridal hour !'
But it drooped its head, that plant of power,
And died the mute death of the voiceless flower ;
And a withered wreath on the ground it lay,
More meet for a burial than a bridal day.

And when a year was past away,
All pale on her bier the young maid lay !
And the glowworm came
With its silvery flame,
And sparkled and shone
Through the night of St. John,
And they closed the cold grave on the maid's cold clay !

Amongst my notes is the following, which I venture to append to what has been here said.

THE FUNERAL CRANTS.

I was greatly affected by the little Prince's sorrow at the funeral of ALBERT THE GOOD, and much touched by the

funeral crants sent by the Queen and the rest of the children. It reminded me of dear old Denmark and of my friends at Copenhagen, and of the grave of poor Rask, the great linguist, who alone, at that time, had deciphered the 'Zendavesta.' It is curious that in 'Hamlet' only do we find the words 'her virgin *crants*' (act v. sc. 1), and where Shakespeare got the word from is as hard to find out as to find out where he got all his other knowledge of life and character from. It is Horace that asks the question on a different point—that of *instinct*:

> Unde, nisi intus,
> Monstratum ?

Be it as it may, wherever he picked up the word—possibly from some old chronicle—he turned it to his use, and made it expressive, although, of all men living, he was the one who best moulded and shaped the English language to his will, and might have said with old Robert of Brunne:

> All is called geste Inglis,
> That in this language spoken is;
> Frankis speeche is called Romaine,
> So sais clerkes and men of France.[1]

The name of Gammel Olger—in which the etymologist will find Danish and Saxon—has been mentioned before. A well-known personage was Olger. No minstrel, as he passed from place to place as the great purveyor of news, but had heard of him and his snake rings; and as every minstrel was more or less a *jongleur* or *joculator* (though it was not till after the time of the Crusades that *conjuring*, in its modern sense, became so common, affording to the people so much of this amusement), Olger was hand and glove with them.

'It was of Gammel Olger,' said my Talking Friend, 'that my venerable father remarked that although he was a very good Christian in his way, he retained as much old heathenism in his nature as he possibly might. Olger, indeed, was of a kindly disposition, and delighted to show kindnesses, but he was not to be thwarted in some of his ways. His snake stones he thought infallible, and there was no *well* in the country which

[1] Hearne's Preface to Langtoft's *Chronicle*, p. cvi.

he did not ascribe some virtue to. But beyond and above all other wells, he thought the old well at Phaley was as serviceable as any. Did not Freoda drink of it, and did not she, who had had no child though ten years a wife, become the mother of seven? Did not the cripple Holcum take his horn full night and morning, and was he not able at last to walk all the way from Silberscot and fill it himself? Was it not the clear water of this sparkling well which restored old Klœfa's eyes of Edgebolt? "So was Olger used to talk," said my time-honoured father, "and pure water was to him a pleasant subject at all times, and he was a constant visitor at the well, and in doing so he declared that he never transgressed legal prohibitions."'

There was again a slight rustling of the leaves of the Old Oak, and, as though turning to me, he said, 'You must well recollect the old well at Phaley, and how even the little turnspit dogs ran to it when let loose from the wheel?' And well enough I did, and how those little turnspits, observing a greater quantity of meat in the old house than usual, arrived at *instinct's* conclusion that there was about to be a feast for others and *a very warm berth* for them, and on the impulse of the moment ran away to the adjoining copse, and were brought back with great indignity, and not even rewarded with the old sop in the pan.

But my thoughts ran chiefly, after this conversation, on the old custom of well-worship, the remnant of which, in some shape or another, has shown itself in successive generations. And indeed, as Hartwig has said in 'The Sea and its Living Wonders,' 'The lover of nature spends hours near some solitary spring, and forgets the flow of time, as he observes the bubbling, and listens to the sweet music of its crystal waters.' Nothing is so soothing as the soft sound of waters, as the Hindoo mother knows who leaves her child to sleep, as the tiny trickling waterfall lulls it in its repose. And what scholar forgets the address of Ausonius to the fountain he loved from his youth?—

> Divona Celtarum lingua, fons addite divis.
> Non Aponus potu, vitrea non luce Nemausus
> Purior, æquoreo non plenior amne Timavus.

Certainly, I can well recollect the wreaths and garlands by many a well in Denmark, and the power attributed to the waters of some favoured one. There was it that the maiden gave away her heart; there was it that she put on the ring of promise; there was it that she snapped that ring in two when *his* love, who had all of *hers*, proved false.

But one need not leave one's own country, or the borders, to say nothing of Ireland, to seek for well-worship, or a faith in it like Gammel Olger's. Sir Walter Scott could have recounted a dozen instances at a breath. As he says in the Introduction to the 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border,' 'There were, upon the borders, many consecrated wells, for resorting to which the people's credulity is severely censured by a worthy physician of the seventeenth century, who himself believed in a shower of herrings having fallen near Dumfries. Many run superstitiously to other wells, and there obtain, as they imagine, health and advantage; and then they offer bread and cheese, or money, by throwing them into the well.' Certainly our Saxon forefathers' superstitious notions are never likely to die out altogether. What one has called 'the beautiful ceremony of the "Well Flowering" at Tissington, near Ashbourn, Derbyshire, which takes place annually on Ascension Day,' may be traced backwards to a rite and a custom not entirely orthodox and Christianwise!

The reader who may wish to see some curious matter on this subject should turn to Hearne's Preface to 'Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle,' in which, if he be an Oxonian, he will have pleasant recollections revived of Walton Well, or Hanwell; of Crosses, or Holywell; of St. Edward's and St. Clement's; to say nothing of Crow-well, and the well-known lines:

> Let no man this well despise;
> It does no harm, but helps the eyes.

What undergraduate in days gone by did not readily lay aside his Aristotle to go and visit Aristotle's Well, and to enjoy himself on a summer's day?

It is believed that many a sacred edifice in this country was erected on the spot where was some well of repute; and what Horace Marryat says of Sweden is pretty generally true

of England, Scotland, and Ireland: 'The presence of wells in the cathedral crypts of both Dalby and Lund may be accounted for by the fact that the earlier Christian churches were mostly founded on the site of pagan temples. The people were much attached to their sacred springs, and so the proselytising bishops wisely adopted them under the new system.' It was natural enough to call to mind Beersheba, or the Well of the Oath, and Jacob's Well, and the Well at Bethlehem!

'There was no doubt entertained at all,' said the Old Oak upon one occasion, 'but that Bertha, Gammel Olger's first daughter, was befriended by the Neckan, or water-spirit, and hence that natural talent for music which brought all the minstrels to the old man's door. Was she not often found alone by the Lloyd's Hole, listening to the fall of the waters, and drinking in sounds which were perceptible to no one else? You may depend upon it,' he added, 'that the kindlier superstitions of Midsummer's Eve and of the Well-worshippers rather tended to humanise our people than otherwise. Cannibalism, to adopt a word of your own times, and revellings on horse-flesh, and infanticide, or, to put it milder, infant exposure, and brutal treatment of slaves, would be on the decline, when the tenderness of love and pity came in!' And I looked at my Talking Friend's gnarled roots and boughs, and the great rifts on his weather-stained bark, into which I could have thrust my hand, and I marvelled that he could have spoken with so much feeling. But, I suppose, it is with hearts of oak as it is sometimes with men of iron mould—none knows their real tenderness till they are tried. I have known men who would have rushed upon the cannon's mouth, and have spiked it too, to whom children took instinctively, knowing that they should be caressed and fondled! Such natures are vastly lovable, and such there were amongst our Anglo-Saxon forefathers. King Edwin, perhaps, had some such disposition as this, of whom Venerable Bede reports: 'Tantum rex idem utilitati suæ gentis consuluit, ut plerisque in locis ubi fontes lucidos juxta publicos viarum transitus conspexit, ibi ob refrigerium viantium, erectis stipitibus, æreos caucos suspendi juberet, neque hos quisquam, nisi ad usum

necessarium, contingere præ magnitudine vel timoris ejus auderet, vel amoris vellet.' In plain English: 'To such an extent did this same king consult the good of his nation, that in very many places where he had noted clear springs where two roads meet, there, having caused stakes to be fixed, he had brazen dishes suspended for the refreshment of the wayfarers; nor durst any man touch them, save for their necessary use, either for the greatness of that awe they bore towards the king, or for the love they entertained towards him.' We, in the nineteenth century, are just beginning to do the same thing over again.

And it was with reference to acts and customs like these that the Old Oak's venerable father always said, that heathenish and barbarous as the early Saxons were, they were an improving people. 'You,' he would continue, 'have the history of our people through monks and bookmen, a one-sided authority, who thought they were never better employed than when declaiming against the vices of the age in which they lived. To denounce vice was, I quite admit, their duty; but in boldly rebuking it they should not have overlaid those many virtues which Christianity had originated and increased, and before which heathenism and pagan rites paled and dwindled away.

Those who would search into this matter fairly may be referred as well to Soames's 'Anglo-Saxon Church' as to his 'Bampton Lectures,' preached in 1830; and in reference to the general imputation of utter wickedness and vice formerly fulminated against the fathers of our race, one may say with the historian Henry, 'It is a misfortune that we have no means of viewing the characters of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, but through the dark medium presented to us by bigoted and gloomy monks, who were the only writers of those times.' Anything but implicit faith, he thought, was due to them.

'Old Ildred Emson,' said my Talking Friend one day, 'was a great favourite with my time-honoured father, who was always pleased when he sat him down to rest beneath his shade, as he often did on his return from the old feast of the gyld at Scrobbesbyrig.[1] It showed great advance in Ildred

[1] 'The name of Shrewsbury is an English corruption of the Anglo-Saxon

to belong to a gyld in a town so renowned as the ancient Pengwerne, and the many gylds and *butt-findings* throughout the nation showed the advance of our forefathers. They were a great mark of increasing civilisation. By their means social intercourse was greatly increased, and they gained a greater hold upon the people at large because they were more or less associated with religious rites. All that attended them were bound to maintain good will towards each other, and to stand up for the peace of the State. The very *love* cup they drained showed the intentions of those who met together; a custom which, I am told, you still retain in city and college feasts; and a very good custom it is, if you will only hold to the spirit of it.'

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Independent of that great boon which resulted to society at large from these old gylds, sodalities, or fraternities, the monthly *symposium*, or, as it was called, *butt-finding*, presently calls to mind our modern CLUBS, wherein the people still show that love of liberty which belongs to their race; and, however ill some clubs may be managed, and notwithstanding the losses which often result from bad investments, one sees in them at once the current of Anglo-Saxon blood. Nothing could be more like than a *gyld-scipe* to one of our Benefit Societies; and the liberty of the subject may be illustrated by the following pithy reply, which came under my notice many years ago.

Some six-and-twenty years ago a club was established amongst our South Saxons here, not on the best principles, but with a hearty good will. I thought it advisable to get it enrolled, wishing to protect the members from such difficulties as will always arise when they will *share out*. I pressed the point as far as I saw I could, and then let it drop, lest the club itself should drop through, and the immediate advantage of it be lost. I mentioned this to the honorary members, who thought with me, but, with one exception, ceded the point

Scrobbes-byrig, or Shrub-borough. The Normans, however, corrupted Scrobbesbury into Sloppesburie, whence the modern name of *Salop* is derived. So, also, the Roman Sorbiodunum was contracted into the English *Sarum*, and then, as in the case of Salop, the Normans changed the *r* into an *l*, and have thus given us the form *Salisbury*.'—ISAAC TAYLOR'S *Words and Places*, p. 400.

as I did, remembering the Frenchman's adage, 'Reculer pour mieux sauter.' The person excepted still wished (prudently enough) to press his point, but it was to no purpose ; and the only answer he got for his importunity was this, conveyed to him by the presiding monthly steward, in words as nearly as I can call them to mind, 'We are much obliged to you for pointing out to us the possible difficulties attending our arrangements. Parson did so, and we thanked him, because he always advises well ; and he, seeing we liked to have our club in our own way, kindly interfered in our matters no more. Now, what we have to say is this. We observe that noblemen and gentlemen of the county, when they have any great work in hand, like to pick their chairman, or trustees, or committee of management, and that they seldom brook much intermeddling. And this is just our case. We too like to have our stewards, and managers, and visitors, and clerk; and if we are not permitted to act in this matter according to our own views, we had rather have no club at all. A club not managed by ourselves, is not our club.'

Wise or unwise, no matter ; but the determination showed that old liberty of purpose which attaches to the Saxon race ; and it is pleasant to remember that the opposing landlord (long since dead) at once gave up his ground with infinite good humour, and paid his subscriptions for the remainder of his life, and, I dare say, often told the story. Wordsworth says somewhere in 'The Excursion,' and vastly true it is :

> Wisdom is ofttimes nearer when we stoop
> Than when we soar.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GREAT IGNORANCE OF THE PEOPLE, EVEN AFTER THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

Gallicum Rhenum, horribilesque ultimosque Britannos.

CATULL. *Carm.* xi. 11.

Britannorum inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo verò subdita.—TERTULL. *Adv. Judæos*, ch. vii.

Whither the Romans never reached, which cannot be understood but of that part which was after called Scotland.—CAMDEN'S *Remains*, p. 5, Ed. 1674.

Who would willingly be unacquainted with the Christian antiquities of his country? Who doth not love to discern the footprints of the steps of the Gospel amongst us, and to see upon what a soil they were impressed!—R. WILSON EVANS, *Tales of the Ancient British Church*, 'Alfred: a Tale of Verulam,' ch. i.

Ventis ut decertata residunt
Æquora, laxatisque diu tamen aura superstes
Immoritur velis.

STAT. *Thebaid.* i. 479.

IT has been mentioned before that when the father of my time-honoured Talking Friend, the Old Oak that still stands both calm and storm and the subtle worm that undermines his trunk, spoke of St. Augustine's arrival, he reported that the aged men of those days called it not the introduction, but the *re*-introduction of Christianity. Instead of an oak, one might have put him down as a divine, like Stillingfleet, when he said that the tradition concerning Joseph of Arimathæa looked to be an invention of the monks of Glastonbury, to serve their interests by increasing the reputation of that monastery; but for all that, like the Primate Ussher in his 'Antiquities of the British Churches,' he made no doubt but that Christianity was planted here by the Apostles themselves, or very closely upon their times. One might, indeed, have put down this time-honoured old tree as something of a critic in

his way, for if he could not, as those marvellous trees in the Persian story, speak Greek, or other tongues, yet did he express himself very much after the fashion of that old Greek who maintained that, than a wise and prudent incredulity there was nothing more serviceable to mortal man.

Σώφρονος δ' ἀπιστίας
Οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν χρησιμώτερον βροτοῖς.

It was not scepticism that he held to, but cautious inquiry and patient investigation, which, he supposed, in the long run, led to truth and truthfulness.

We must not, however, confound—which the good Old Oak did sometimes—the British and the Anglo-Saxon conversion. It is, and ever will be, a matter open to discussion as to who first introduced Christianity into these islands ; but about the *re*-introduction there can be no question at all. And even if, as it has been suggested, the Anglo-Saxons were reckless of documentary evidence, the history of the Italian Mission abides for all time in the simple words of the Venerable Bede. In our old antiquary Camden's words, 'Excellent is that which our countryman Reverend Beda reporteth in his "Ecclesiastical History of England," as the cause that moved Gregory the Great to send Augustine to England.'

It will always bear repeating, and here it is at length ; nor let it escape the reader that the apparent Italian trifling of Gregory arose from serious feeling and ended in serious endeavours.

'Nor is the account of St. Gregory, which has been handed down to us by the tradition of our ancestors, to be passed by in silence, in relation to his motives for taking such interest in the salvation of our nation. It is reported that some merchants, having just arrived at Rome on a certain day, exposed many things for sale in the market-place, and abundance of people resorted thither to buy : Gregory himself went with the rest ; and among other things, some boys were set to sale, their bodies white, their countenances beautiful, and their hair very fine. Having viewed them, he asked, as is said, from what country or nation they were brought ; and was told, from the island of Britain, whose inhabitants were of such personal

appearance. He again inquired whether these islanders were Christians, or still involved in the errors of paganism; and was informed that they were pagans. Then fetching a deep sigh from the bottom of his heart, "*Alas! what pity,*" said he, "*that the author of darkness is possessed of men of such fair countenances; and that being remarkable for such graceful aspects, their words should be void of inward grace.*" He therefore again asked, what was the name of that nation; and was answered that they were called Angles. "*Right,*" said he, "*for they have an angelic face, and it becomes such to be coheirs with the angels in heaven. What is the name,*" proceeded he, "*of the province from which they are brought?*" It was replied that the natives of that province were called Deiri. "*Truly they are De ira,*" said he: "*withdrawn from wrath, and called to the mercy of Christ. How is the king of that province called?*" They told him his name was Ella; and he, alluding to the name, said, "*Hallelujah! the praise of God the Creator must be sung in those parts.*"

'Then, repairing to the Bishop of the Roman Apostolical See (for he was not himself then made Pope), he entreated him to send some ministers of the Word into Britain to the nation of the English, by whom it might be converted to Christ, declaring himself ready to undertake that work, by the assistance of God, if the Apostolic Pope should think fit to have it so done; which not being then able to perform, because, though the Pope was willing to grant his request, yet the citizens of Rome could not be brought to consent that so noble, so renowned, and so learned a man should depart the city, as soon as he was himself made Pope, he perfected the long-desired work, sending other preachers, but by himself by his prayers and exhortations assisting the preaching, that it might be successful. This account, as we have received it from the ancients, we have thought fit to insert in our Ecclesiastical History.'

Such is Venerable Bede's simple account, and one would like to know who 'the ancients' were from whom he derived it. Let me attach to this the no less simple Ecclesiastical Sonnet of Wordsworth:

CASUAL INCITEMENT.

A bright-haired company of youthful slaves,
Beautiful strangers, stand within the pale
Of a sad market, ranged for public sale,
Where Tiber's stream the immortal city laves:
ANGLI by name; and not an Angel waves
His wing who could seem lovelier to man's eye
Than they appear to holy Gregory;
Who, having learnt that name, salvation craves
For them and for their land. The earnest Sire,
His questions urging, feels, in slender ties
Of chiming sound, commanding sympathies;
DE-IRIANS, he would save them from God's IRE;
Subjects of Saxon ÆLLA, they shall sing
Glad HALLE-lujahs to the Eternal King!

If we put this down to about A.D. 596, we may say that the pagan Saxons had had their wild way for about a hundred and fifty years, and no doubt a very wild way it was. As the poet puts it:

Far and wide,
As when from marish dark, or quaking fen,
Venomous and vast the clouds uproll, and spread
Pale pestilence along the withering land,
So sweeps o'er all the isle his wasting bands
The conqueror Saxon.

But long before the arrival of St. Augustine and his monks—if we may reverently apply the words so, 'of *the band called the Italian band*'—there is much reason to think, perhaps to know, that glints of light broke in upon this savage people, whose religion might be picked up from the Edda, and not improbably through the far-away influence of the British Church in its fastnesses, or from Caer-leon on Usk, or from Verulamium, soon called St. Albans, after the martyr's own name. At all events, when they came into Britain with their wild and haggard heathendom, and diversities of horrible rites, fierce and sanguinary as Druidism in its worst forms, 'in many towns and stations,' as our historian of the Anglo-Saxons reports, 'they met with tombstones, altars, and other lapidary inscriptions; images, temples, and public works dedicated to several of the imaginary deities, which Rome, in her paganism, and her allies had worshipped.' To a land in which

the Church of Christ existed they certainly came; to a land which had sent her bishops to the Council of Arles, A.D. 314; to Sardica, A.D. 347; and to Ariminium or Rimini, A.D. 360; to a land in which we may almost venture to say that even the remnants of Druidism were tinctured with a better faith as its ineffectual fires paled.

But then arises a question, did the British Church leaven the people at large, and to real and practical effects? It is to be feared that in most places to which they came these worshippers of Odin had but little to turn them from vain idols, dumb and senseless, to the worship of the living GOD. If in after ages Romish superstition had power to overlay the faith, what must we think was the effect of heathen superstition or the paganism of the day?

Whatever we may think, the palpable reality is before us in the history of the people; and although it has been said, and may be admitted with certain limitations and restrictions, that 'all forms of paganism, though frequently at variance with morality, are yet the antagonists of atheism, and of its counterpart, a disbelief of the moral government of the Deity,' that 'although paganism attaches the feelings and opinions to imaginary beings, yet it preserves in the general mind the impression of a Divine power and providence interested by human conduct and superintending human concerns; commanding nature, punishing crimes, imposing precepts; inevitable yet placable; and on whose distribution all the good and evil of life continually depend;' although this, I say, in great measure may be admitted, yet the great ignorance of our Saxon forefathers generally, after the introduction of Christianity, must be admitted too. We were but a sort of Occidental Esau in our way, and we may apply the words of the Book of Genesis, 'And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him: and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren;' that is to say, 'All which notwithstanding, his success shall be such, that he shall live to rule far and wide in all the coasts of his brethren.'

But how came it about that they dwelt in the presence of their brethren? Wild from their primeval forests, how came

they to settle down, and from distinct and for many ages ill-united bands, how came they to coalesce and to unite? In all their wildness and their wanderings there was within them that determination towards liberty which still shows itself in every colony of the Anglo-Saxon; and the liberty of the community (till law takes its proper place) is best provided for when each one is resolute to protect his fellow. As said before, their gylds, their sodalities, their fraternities, helped them on. These, well developed, were the people's blessing. But for these they would have crumbled into disunion and nothingness like a rope of sand.

Perhaps the advance towards Church membership, too, was somewhat different from what is generally supposed, and St. Paul's in London may have been first Diana's temple, and St. Peter's at Westminster the temple of Apollo, the old heathen ground being used up as Christianity advanced, and its old fanes being accommodated to a better service, being, so to say, made '*broad plates for a covering of the altar*,' and thus continuing to be '*a sign*' to the converted.

And this is the opinion which I think Mr. Kemble in his 'Saxons in England' intended to carry out. For although he admits that men of means, bishops and abbots, erected many churches as necessity demanded, yet he thinks the greater number of parish churches (*ecclesiæ baptismales, tituli majores*) had probably a very different origin. It has been shown that in all likelihood every mark had its religious establishment, its *fanum, delubrum*, or *sacellum*, as the Latin authors call them; its *hearh*, as the Anglo-Saxon, no doubt, designated them; and further, that the priest or priests attached to these heathen churches had lands—perhaps free-will offerings, too—for their support. It has also been shown that a well-grounded plan of turning the *religio loci* to account was acted upon by all the missionaries, and that wherever a substantial building was found in existence, it was taken possession of for the behoof of the new religion. Under such circumstances it would seem that nothing could be more natural than the establishment of a baptismal church in every independent mark that adopted Christianity, and that the substitution of one creed for the other not only

did not require the abolition of the old machinery, but would be much facilitated by retaining it. It is in this manner that I understand the assertions of Beda and others—that certain missionary prelates established churches *per loca*, such churches being certainly not cathedrals or abbey churches. Such was the origin, no doubt, of the churches of Hanwood, Pontesbury, Westbury, Minsterley, and Ford, all in the vicinity of the Old Oak's locality, and about which he heard talk, still retaining many curious histories which his old father had recited to him in detail.

The name of Gammel Olger, his well-worship, his half-heathenism and half-Christianity, has been mentioned before; 'and is much the same sort of a story,' said my Talking Friend one day, 'which my time-honoured father used to report of Haward the Dark, a very curious, rough-hewn, singular old man, who lived close by the stream which flows under Newnham, not far from the present farm which bears the name of the Lynches.'

By the rustling of his leaves, I at once perceived that my Talking Friend had something he was willing to impart, and so I said, 'I should much like to hear what the time-honoured oak, your father, had to tell of Haward the Dark, for I suspect he was a character. Am I right?'

'A character he certainly was,' replied the Oak, 'but why he bore the name of "The Dark" I never knew. His acts were odd, eccentric, and *out of*, what you would call, *course*; but as far as I ever heard, there was no cruelty in his nature —a term more or less associated with darkness. After all, it is but a few things that I can call to mind about him; still, the venerable old oak, my father, considered him, of all others, the most shrewd and intelligent. All the queer things he said and did (he was what you would call wizard and wag combined) seemed to have an under current—like the Rea when it forms a pool, and after *thinking* awhile flows on afresh over its bed of gravel!

'The first thing I recollect the old oak's saying was, that Haward's dress was behind the age. In summer, perhaps, there was not so much to remark upon, but in winter he wore an otter-skin coat, with three tails hanging behind, only to be

exchanged periodically for a coat of badger's skin, sent to him (knowing how much he loved the skins of animals) from a place on the borders of the county, near Shiffnal, called BADGER, not improbably from the number of that then common animal which frequented both its dingle, and its sandbanks, and the whole neighbourhood.' At which words I ventured to make a *Hem! Hem!* of hesitation, under the impression that my Talking Friend was confusing times and names. At all events, I seemed to think that *Broc* was the old name for badger, and that the old Saxon word *Broccan*, which meant a long garment extending from the shoulders to the loins, was derived from it—the very dress, probably, which Haward used to alternate with his otter's robe. I was by no means sure, moreover, as to the derivation of the word in my own mind, at all, for I knew that the old haunt of my childhood (when I received great kindness from one now departed, and where, in the dingle, I heard the first nightingale I ever heard) was called *Beghesovre* in Domesday, and that the pedigree of the De Beggesovere dated within forty years after the Conquest; but the Old Oak gave no heed to what a Christian would have considered a questioning point, but quietly went on to say:

'Haward the Dark, I recollect my father to have said, had a particular dislike to weasels and shrew-mice, though they had good skins; and if ever he saw one of the latter cross the road he turned three times round, and said, MERCY HO! at the same time uttering a low, shrill whistle. This exsifflation of surprise I have heard you say is not uncommon still amongst the South Saxons, and I certainly have often heard the words *Beshrew me!* uttered by those who have passed by me on a summer's day, altogether forgetful of the shade and the rest they might have had if they would but have waited awhile.

'Not far from where he lived was a little stream, which, though after rain and in winter a torrent, could in summer be stepped over. Whenever Haward came to this country streamlet, he was used to say:

> Shall I go over, or shall I no?
> Daker, Daker, Daker, ho!

And he would keep stepping backwards and forwards as though he were, what he most certainly was not, a great simpleton. I think my father said this streamlet was near Condover, or Pulverbatch—called by the natives *Powther-bitch*, but I am not clear upon the point—for the winds and the storms shake my old head severely at times.

'After Christian Baptism had been the custom of the country for centuries, he always declared that it should be by immersion, and in winter in *warm water*. They never *dipped* their children of old time, he said, in the Rea *but* in the summer months; and once *dipped* they never drowned, but were under the care of the water-spirit. Every big hole had its water-spirit, and he had often heard their cry. Old Halcro the Dane told us upon one occasion that the Icelanders made the same demand for warm water from the geysers on the introduction of Christianity into that island. Whether so or no, Haward the Black constantly mixed Christian and heathen rites together, and as he ate the bread at the Sacrament (the cup, you know, had latterly gone out of use) he did not fail to call to mind the *corsned*, or consecrated barley cake, of his forefathers, used time out of mind at one of their ordeals.

'He used to say that infanticide had been common in these parts, even since what we call the early ages, and that any judgment or visitation which fell upon those who injured little children was richly deserved. Women, he said—some Boadicea or two excepted—could not, perhaps, use bows and arrows as well as men, but they could *keep homes*, as our old Saxon forefathers framed their speech, and if any Saxon put a female child to death he was the worst of pagans. No wonder he was so fond of his little girl Wynfreda—as her name implied, His Peace of Joy!—and that he called her all sorts of endearing names—Pige, Queenie, Birdie, Cherub, and his Pride of the Rea! "And did I not protect her," saith he, "from all evil stars with bough of the wych-elm? Did I forget, when she was dipped, to call upon the water-sprites, pouring out mede upon the stream, mixed with vervain and dill, and mugwort, lest they should be offended for want of an offering?" No *Mara* ever tortured her by night, or *Occas*

Boccas by day—words which you may still recognise in your not yet extinct terms Night-*mare* and *Old Bogie* of the nursery. Haward the Dark was not a man to have omitted all proper provisions against *Scin-craft* and *Scin-lœcas*. Not he! Indeed, this was the only possible reason I could ever suggest to myself for his nickname "DARK." Not that the people thought that he was attached to the Black Art; on the contrary, they were much attached to him, and he bore always that pleasant name of a "good neighbour," never used by the Anglo-Saxon but significantly. Haward himself always maintained that from the time he became a thorough convert to Christian religion, he had no superstition (so easily do we all deceive ourselves), but, he added, he did not wish to move quiet old customs, and he thought it better that bells should be rung in heavy storms of thunder and lightning, as it was generally believed that "the ringing of bells exceedingly disturbs spirits."

'Every now and then old Haward would use proverbs (you wiseacres of the present day, I believe, like the old philosopher whose Rhetoric *you* bungled at many a summer's day beneath my shade, generally attribute the use of proverbs to *rustics*), such as, *Need makes the old wife run*, or, *Men carve broad thongs from an unbought hide.* Nothing, indeed, delighted him so much as *practical economy.* Then again he would take up his proverb and say to the unobservant, *The field has eyes and the wood has ears*; "and I believe," said my venerable father, "he thought that all animated nature had a voice, and that if anyone spoke lightly, in field or wood, the spirits of the wood and the field would one day have their revenge." His ideas, at least, were advanced, if his proverbs were somewhat musty!

'And I very well recollect how that, although, as the old oak my father said, he laughed outright at the Saxon mummeries on the calends of January, learnt from the Romans, when the people disguised themselves as old women and like stags—yet he coupled the old custom with prayers of propitiation, if so be the earth might yield its increase, and the harvest be abundant, and the country rejoice in kindly fruits of ingathering and increase. On these occa-

sions all the holly with its red or yellow, and all the ivy with its black, berries and green leaves, that could be found, were gathered and used as an ornamental dressing—as long after at the Feast of Fools. For these Christmas evergreens old Haward was a great stickler. If they were beautiful, he used to say, in a heathen *fane* (he had picked up the name from the Romans), there was no irreligion in them, and they would be equally so in any church Christian. Who would say, and say the truth, that they are not beautiful in our old church at Hanwood—the dear old church of our forefathers?'

And the spirit of thoughtfulness came over the old tree, and he said with a burst—I thought I could hear his old bark rattle—'I would give the best limb I have—my whole trunk—to repair that dear old church, if needed; but, methinks, none of your blood will ever let it be in a state which ill becomes any church in a land called Christian, so I need not trouble myself!' And there was a gentle breath of summer in his leaves which said that he was at rest! Good old venerable tree! had all professing Christians been of your opinion, we should have had no great forsaking in the midst of the land, but an increase of churches in accordance with the increase of the population and its worldly prosperity!

Meanwhile the above mention of the Feast of Fools—the old heathen festival of the January calends, as contradistinguished from the Feast of Apes, which, in France, flourished in the fifteenth century—called to my mind the words of that very able historian and antiquary, Maitland, one of the best librarians and keepers of the MSS. at Lambeth on record: 'The Feast of Fools was a more ancient and more widely celebrated festival, which may perhaps be more or less traced in all ages of the Church, and in all parts of Christendom. Even now, I suppose, there is hardly a parish church in our Protestant country which does not annually exhibit some trace or relic of it. Notwithstanding the decrees of councils, and the homilies of Fathers, the Christmas evergreen—the *viriditas arborum*—which they denounced, still keeps its ground.'

Upon one occasion my Talking Friend told me 'how his

venerable father recollected certain strips of land which were set apart for the use of the several churches of Hanwood, Pontesbury, Ford, and Brace Meole—thence, as you very well know, the addition of Brace came from the Norman Audulf de *Braci*, and that the people called them *Holy breaths*, or *Holy breads*, I never knew which—all I can call to mind his saying was, that things were for the use of the Church and the priest, and that they were as much theirs to have and to hold as the tofts were the tenants' when made over to them by their lord. He used to add that old Tanewaestal was wont to declare that his freedom was agreed to at the church door at Hanwood, and he was to be for ever *sacks*, and the form of words was this—

Christ hine áblende,
e ðis gewrit áwende;

that is to say, "Christ blind him who setteth this writ aside." Scarce Christian words, you will say, but the Anglo-Saxon never minced his words, and the plainest speech yet remaining to us is theirs.'

And this set me to think upon what we find in the 'Saxon Chronicle' under A.D. 855. 'King Ethelwulf gave by charter the tenth part of his land throughout his realm to the glory of God and his own eternal salvation.' For although it is not necessary to enter into later disputes as to this grant, it so far illustrates the Old Oak's remarks as to show that the Church was not forgotten, and that the king on his throne thought '*the labourer was worthy of his hire.*' It is not necessary here to say that the clergy put in their claims as founded on the Levitical law, or on Divine right; they simply accepted with much thankfulness a gift which was as much for the people's benefit as their own, and if at any time felonious hands were laid upon what had been set aside for holy need, they would naturally open their Bibles and turn to the Prophet Ezekiel, and read such words as these: '*And they shall not sell it, neither exchange, nor alienate the first-fruits of the land: for it is holy unto the Lord.*' It is a question still if 'tithe commutation,' as it is called, has done much good, as all blame of contention is sure to be thrown back on anyone who has to substantiate his claim. Indeed, it is but a form, or *modus decimandi*, which has

tithed over your tithes in many a place. 'Meantime,' as old Fuller adds, 'most true it is, that men are not so conscientious to obey the laws of God, as fearful to resist the edicts of men: and therefore, though far be it from the clergy to quit their title to tithes by Divine right, they conceive it the surest way sometimes to make use of human injunctions, as have the most potent influence on men's affections, especially in this age, when the love of many, both to God and goodwill, beginneth to wax cold.'

'Great confusion was there constantly,' the Old Oak's father said, 'even after gifts were made to churches and to Churchmen; and what was good in itself was not always put to good uses. Many a time, too, the priests gave themselves up to anything but their ministry, and then, of course, the people took their fling. It has been said, indeed, and there is some reason to think there was truth in the assertion, that after churches were consecrated, and endowed as they were in those days, there were now and then to be found secret altars within their very walls for the propitiation of heathen deities.'

Strange as the remark may appear, it only tends to illustrate the great ignorance both of priest and people even after the introduction of Christianity, and the innate wickedness of the human heart, as so marvellously set down in the eighth chapter of the Prophet Ezekiel, where it is asked, '*Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery?*' What a study is this chapter for us all! Who hath not the secret chambers of his imagery?

In connection with what has been said above, I may give the following illustration from Horace Marryat's 'One Year in Sweden.' 'After the destruction of Haltersta Church, in 1803, in the southern side were found two pagan altars of sacrifice, fitted with chimney pipes, still containing ashes and bones of animals, bricked up when the building was adapted to Christian worship.' How long did it continue afterwards?

> But if those pagans proud so plagued were,
> Which toke on them ambitiously the swaye,
> Will not the Almighty's justice soone appeare,
> When Christian men their Christian kings betraye?

It has been adverted to before that my Talking Friend's father did not think the Danes had any great hold in his locality. 'Occasionally,' he would say, 'they were found at Pengwerne, and he had heard travellers speak of one called Heolf, and of another called Harvar, who had settled and intermarried there, and played their pranks on the Severn, as they would have done in the Baltic or in the creeks and rocks of the North Sea. They were, however, few and far between. Luckily for us by the Rea-side,' he would add, 'when the greater part of England was scourged and ravaged by those wild marauders, we were much too poor and inconsiderable a people to tempt their lust for spoil and robbery. In fact, we rather heard of than saw either their pillages or their burnings, and I must admit that we, within reach of the Stiperstones and the Wrekin and Pym-hill, as you now speak, were quite wild enough without the mixture of Scandinavian blood, and naked enough even to have been called *Berserkars*.'

But although the Old Oak's father spoke thus, there is no doubt at all about the increased barbarism of the people after the inroads of the Danes, who, perhaps, only looked upon the Christianised Anglo-Saxons as apostates from Woden, and the mixed theology of the Edda scarcely surpassed by Hesiod's. At all events, whether for the sins of the people or for their own ends, to use the words of the Lady Ebba—a name still retained in Oxford :

> The Danes with ruth our realme did overrunne,
> Their wrath enwrapte us all in wretchednesse,
> There was no sinne from which those men did shunne ;
> By them the commonweale was quite undonne ;
> They did destroy the state of every towne,
> They churches burnt, they pluckt the abbies downe.

On turning to the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,' A.D. 787, we read : 'In this year King Beorhtric took Eadburh, King Offa's daughter, to wife. And in his days first came three ships of Northmen from Hæretha land. And then the reeve rowed thereto, and would drive them to the king's vill, for he knew not what they were, and they then slew him. These

were the first ships of Danish men that sought the land of the English race.'

Some years previous to this, the Danes kept hovering about our shores, and till the year A.D. 1074, when they were bribed, for the last time, by King William to depart, they were always ready for pillage and robbery. Indeed, the constant return of the Northmen, wasting and burning as they came, was a most certain means of keeping the country in a wild state of disquiet combined with that fear which leads to cruel acts of retribution. The most untoward of all the Saxons in their generations were nothing when compared with these fierce marauders of the north, whose naked *Bersærkrs* (as the Old Oak called them) were more rabid than the bears and the wolves of their native pasturages, and more to be dreaded than the fabled kraken of their boisterous seas.

A striking instance of that love for the battle which is a presumptive evidence of remaining barbarism, is given by Snorro Sturluson in 'Hakon the Good's Saga'—Athelstan's foster-son, who had been converted to Christianity, and reigned, according to recorded dates, from A.D. 937 to A.D. 961.

Take the words of the Heimskringla in Laing's version.

'The spies came to King Hakon, and told him that Eric's sons, with a great army, lay just to the south of Stad. Then he called together the most understanding of the men about him, and asked their opinion, whether he should fight with Eric's sons, although they had such a great multitude with them, or should set off northwards to gather together more men. Now there was a bonder there, by name Egil Ullsærk, who was a very bold man, but in former days had been strong and stout beyond most men, and a hardy man at arms withal, having long carried King Harald's banner. Egil answered thus to the King's speech: "I was in several battles with thy father, Harald the King, and he gave battle sometimes with many and sometimes with few people; but he always came off with victory. Never did I hear him ask counsel of his friends whether he should fly, and neither shalt thou get any such counsel from us, king; but as we know we have a brave leader, thou shalt get a trusty following from

us." Many others agreed with this speech, and the king himself declared he was most inclined to fight with such strength as they could gather. It was so determined. The king split up a war-arrow, which he sent off in all directions, and by that token a number of men was collected in all haste. Then, said Egil Ullsærk: "At one time the peace had lasted so long I was afraid I might come to die the death of old age, within doors upon a bed of straw, although I would rather fall in battle following my chief. And now it may so turn out in the end as I wished it to be."' To which Mr. Laing appends this note, 'In all the sagas of this pagan time the dying on a bed of sickness is mentioned as a kind of derogatory end of a man of any celebrity.'

More than once I have thought that Chaucer in the 'Man of Lawes Tale' adopted the custom of the Northmen, whose Christianity was uncertain and their intermixture of heathenism sure. Those who are read in Northern lore will readily recollect how indifferent the Vikings were, for example, as to the number of times they received what they were pleased to admit to be Christian Baptism. 'Twenty times,' said an old Viking, 'have I been dipped, and to receive the rite another time or so can be of no consequence'! With this often-told tale let the thoughtful and historical reader compare the words of the Soudanesse:

> We shal first feine us Christendom to take;
> Cold water shal not greve us but a lite;
> And I shal swiche a feste and revel make,
> That, as I trow, I shal the Soudan quite.
> For tho his wif be cristened never so white,
> She shal have nede to wash away the rede,
> Though she a font of water with here lede.

If the words of Chaucer can be traced to any other original, well and good; if not, it is very probable they may find their application nearer home.

All readers of our history know how terrible was the name of the Danes, and how miserable was the state of the English. As for the former, says old Fuller, they, 'like the running gout, shifted from joint to joint, from place to place; often repelled from the several shires, never expelled out of Eng-

land.' To which he pointedly adds, 'The Saxon folly hurt them more than the Danish fury; refusing effectually to unite to make a joint resistance against a general enemy.' Such was their lack of wisdom in not assisting Æthelred the West Saxon king. 'They would more contentedly be slaves to a foreign foe, to whom they all stood unrelated, than pay homage to him who had, as they thought, usurped dominion over them. Never considering that the Danes were pagans (self-interest is deaf to the checks of conscience); and revenge, which is wild at the best, was so mad in them, that they would procure it with the hazard, if not loss, of their God, His Church, and true religion. Thus the height of the Saxon pride and envy caused the breadth of the Danish power and cruelty.'

But did the Saxons grudge to impart their knowledge of Christianity? Whether or not, their conduct resulted in the increase of barbarism, and for many and long a day darkness brooded over the face of the land, and it was not till Alfred arose, that there seemed any hope of matters mending. His history, as every child knows, is a great chapter in our annals. As old Fuller says again, 'Consider him as a king in his court, as a general in his camp, as a Christian in his closet, as a patron in the Church, as a founder in his college, as a father in his family, his actions will every way appear no less excellent in themselves than exemplary to others.'

But the history of Alfred is to be read in our historians. It is only necessary here to advert to a few points of his policy such as tend to the advancement of religious and useful learning, and so to the decrease of barbarism.

And one thing appears pretty clear, which is this. Having defended his own people and done his best for them, he looked evidently to the fusion and union of the two races, and was willing to come to terms which might tend to the improvement and general advancement of the Anglo-Saxon race. And in this light I am inclined to read these passages of the 'Saxon Chronicle.' For example: 'A.D. 876. In this year the army stole away to Wareham, a fortress of the West Saxons, and after that the king made peace with the army; and they gave to the king as hostages those who were most

honourable in the army, and they then swore oaths to him on the holy ring, which they before would not do to any nation, that they would speedily depart from his kingdom.' And although they broke their oath that same night, yet to call Odin to witness and to swear upon the holy ring, or bracelet, at all, showed that there was some desire to come over to Alfred's terms. So again, after that notable defeat, we read under 'A.D. 878. And then the army gave him hostages with great oaths that they would depart from his kingdom, and also promised him that their king should receive baptism, and that they so fulfilled; and three weeks after, King Guthorm came to him, with thirty of the men who were most honourable in the army, at Aller, which is opposite to Athelney, and the king received him there at baptism; and his chrism-loosing[1] was at Wedmore; and he was twelve nights with the king; and he largely gifted him and his companions with money.'

These and other passages in the history of this great man all seem to me to look towards the amalgamation of the Dane with the Saxon, and so to the advance of civilisation; and it is satisfactory to find that my view of the subject is that maintained by the eminent author of the 'Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury.' The passage is of importance, and I venture to give it at length.

'The Archbishop was now summoned to the Witenagemot at Wedmore, and he found the great king, who had in battle and in the preparations of war exhibited the prudence and sagacity of a consummate general, equally prudent and far-seeing when assuming his place as a legislator and a statesman. In a thickly populated country, where marshes were to be drained, and forests levelled, and land reclaimed, there was ample room for the two races; and Alfred perceived that the greatness as well as the safety of the country depended on the fusion of the two races into one united people. This was his policy, and it became the traditional policy of his house. He perceived that the one thing which kept them apart was the

[1] 'Apparently the removal of the fillet which, covering the chrism on the forehead, was bound round the head at Confirmation.'—R.P. The late Anglo-Saxon scholar, Richard Price.

difference of religion, and hence his first stipulation was, that the Danes should submit to the Sacrament of Baptism. This acceptance of Baptism immediately blended their interests with those of the Anglo-Saxons, since the bitterness of the foreign Danes was in part occasioned by their regarding the English as apostates from the worship of Woden. Although the policy of Alfred did not immediately produce all the fruits which he anticipated and desired, yet from his time the Anglo-Danes became a race distinct from the foreign Scandinavians. They made war sometimes with the Anglo-Saxon kings, but the war was like that which had been frequently made between the kingdoms of the Heptarchy; and they gradually, like the Normans at another period of our history, became absorbed into the English, making ultimately a fusion so entire that the distinction of race was lost, and one great empire formed.'

One day I had been meditating on the ignorance of the people of the land previous to the time of Alfred, and of their manifold superstitions mixed up with the Christian faith they professed, and as I communed with myself and thought upon the infinite blessing to every land of having such a prince as Alfred, whose great object was to improve his subjects, and how he diligently set about to learn himself in order to teach them; as I was meditating, I say, on so interesting a subject, I looked up to the Old Oak's branches, and I noted how he had made his midsummer shoots, and had drunk in pleasantly such showers as usually fall about St. Swithun's-tide; and thinking that his mood was as pleasant as his leaves were green, I put a question to my Talking Friend, and asked him 'if he had ever heard his venerable father mention the name of Plegemunde.'

Without hesitation he made answer that he had, and that it was the hermit of Minsterley—a much greater place in those days than now, though the rail may bring it again to light—who had told him of that good and learned man. 'He had visited him,' he said, 'in the *marishes* not far from Ceastre, or Lageceastre' (our Chester, as you know), 'when he was at Wirhela—that tract or peninsula between the Dee and the Mersey comprising the city of Chester—when he

had, on his way home, stopped at Bangor *Iscoed*, looked at the modern Marchwich, and visited *Castel Caled Vsyn yn Rhôs* on his return through *Sêr Denbech*, or the old land of the Ordovices ; wondering at Wats Dyke and Offa's Dyke, or, as a Welshman called it at Pentre Bychan, where he stopped, *Clawold Offa.* "He was a garrulous old man," said my time-honoured father, "and gave me an account of his whole journey home by Writtlesham, which you call Gwrecsam, or Wrexham, all the way to Scrobbesbyrig. He was on his way thence to Minsterley when he rested beneath my shade, and, in giving an account of his wanderings, told me all about Plegemunde—how good a man he was, and how learned, and what a friend of the King's."'

Men of this caste—Plegmund, Erigena, Asser, Grimbald—these were the men that Alfred called to his counsel, and to help him in the great work he had in hand. The conquest, indeed, over the Danes, was not his greatest. The victory of all his victories was the comparative civilisation of the people. 'Alfred,' says Fuller, 'having thus reduced England to some tolerable terms of quiet, made most of the Danes his subjects by conquest, and the rest his friends by composition, encountered a fiercer foe, namely, ignorance and barbarism, which had generally invaded the whole nation. Insomuch that he writeth that south of the Thames he could not find any that could read English.' In the well-known words of his Preface, so often quoted, 'So clean was it fallen out of England, that there are very few on this side the Humber who understand to say their prayers in English, or to translate any letter from Latin into English ; and I know that there were not many beyond the Humber ; so few were they that I, indeed, cannot think of a single instance south of the Thames when I took the kingdom.'

It is a pleasant thing to think that Alfred's wishes were accomplished, and that the Danes, if not 'weary of their barbarism' (they are the words of Sir F. Palgrave, quoted in the 'Biographia Britannica Literaria'), were contented to be but thorns in his side for the rest of his life, and to pillage his coasts.

What a sight to have beheld the warrior turned into the

student king, and busy, at his lamp, whether over the works of Orosius, or Bede, or the 'Pastorale' of Pope Gregory, or the 'Soliloquies' of St. Augustine, or Boethius' 'De Consolatione Philosophiæ,' and, if William of Malmesbury speak true, over his version of the Psalms, which through all ages have been, as it were, a little Gospel.

> But Gospel-truth is potent to allay
> Fierceness and rage; and soon the cruel Dane
> Feels, through the influence of her gentle reign,
> His native superstitions melt away.
> Thus, often, when thick gloom the east o'ershrouds,
> The full-orbed moon, slow climbing, doth appear
> Silently to consume the heavy clouds;
> *How*, no one can resolve; but every eye
> Around her sees, while air is hushed, a clear
> And widening circuit of ethereal sky.

Those who look to civilisation and the increase of religious knowledge amongst the people, might, on the first blush, be inclined to wonder that the work of '*Bocca*,' as Chaucer calls him, should have held the place it does—translated by an Alfred and an Elizabeth!

The death of Alfred, king over all the Angle race, fell out A.D. 901, and the same 'Saxon Chronicle' which reports this has the entry which follows, under 'A.D. 892. And in the same year, after Easter, about the Rogations (May 29) or earlier, appeared the star which, in book-Latin, is called *cometa*. Some men say in English that it is a long-haired (*feaxed*) star, because there stands a long ray from it, sometimes on one side, sometimes on each side.'

The time-honoured Old Oak by the Rea's side, as has been said before, partook of the common alarm, and my Talking Friend told me that some such a star had appeared in the heavens before the death of Alfred. 'The people,' said he, did nothing but talk of it as they passed this way, and the Cymry, of all others, on their way to Trê Valdwyn' (the district which now goes by the name of Montgomery) 'were utterly confounded by it. A mixture of admiration and surprise, alarm and terror, seemed to overwhelm them. But,' added he, with an amusing rustling of his leaves, 'Taffy eased his mind by that quick, rapid sort of talk to which you will

always find the Cymry addicted, whether they wish to overreach and deceive *you* or to satisfy *themselves*! Evidently my venerable father, some time or other, had been duped by a Welsh wayfarer.'

And as I turned it over in my mind I said, 'Better that fond superstition which an improved education will remove, than the hard unbelief and atheistical temperament of an Andronicus, "who," says Fuller in his Life, "being told of the apparition of a comet (no lieger star of heaven, but an extraordinary embassador) portending his death, as some expounded it, he scoffingly replied that he was glad to see the heavens so merry to make bonfires for his triumphs; and what was a comet but the kitchen-stuff of the air, which blazing for a while, would go off in a snuff; adding, that the star might presage the fall of some prince that wore long hair, whereas his was short enough."'

And thus, provided we do not fall into the vulgar error of setting down every one as ignorant in Anglo-Saxon times who could not read, we may readily admit the great ignorance of the people, even after the introduction of Christianity. But the point just adverted to must be allowed its weight. For, to read, when there were no *printed* books to read, was considered to be simply useless by those who had to don their harness, and to protect their households, and to keep off all marauders, whether bipeds or quadrupeds. Book-learning and study was not for such. It was very well for Scalde and Glamen—it was their vocation, and earned them a place in the hall and at the table, and not always below the salt! Read, quotha! that was the priests' and the lectors' business; why should they concern themselves with such trifling? But these are

Matters and causes incident to time!

And yet many a sturdy thane and ealderman, and many a warrior (Heretouk they named such a captain of war), had to pay the penalty of his ignorance and inability. Could the one or the other have read or written, they would have kept many a secret; whereas, when they had to divulge matters to a scribe, they were soon bruited abroad (for to such their

knowledge was power), and thus occasion slipped them by, and opportunity was lost. There is a passage in the 'Mirror of Magistrates' which speaks to the purpose. It is to be found in the Wilful Fall of the Blacksmith, and the Foolish Ende of Lorde Awdeley in June, Anno 1496. The only remark to be made on the lines is that what is fit, in this instance, for noble youth, is fitted for all ranks and societies amongst us.

For noble youth there is nothing so meete
As learning is, to knowe the good from yll :
To know the tonngs and perfectly endyte,
And of the lawes to have a perfect skill,
Things to reform as right and justice will :
For honour is ordayned for no cause,
But to see ryght mayntayned by the lawes.

It spites my heart to hear when noble men
Cannot disclose their secrets to their frend
In saveguarde sure, with paper, inke, and pen,
But first they must a secretarie fynde,
To whom they shewe the bottome of theire mynde :
And bee hee false or true, a blab or close,
To him they must their counsayle needs disclose.

Looking every way, and considering the matter on all sides, one may say now, and one might have said then, 'However ruffled or unsatisfactory may be the surface of the Church, the softening and cleansing influences of Christianity are always sanctifying society in its depths.' As regards myself personally, as I have turned over chronicle after chronicle, and history after history, I have often thought how applicable to Anglo-Saxon days and times were those lines of Ovid in the 'Fasti.' What Numa was in those early days of Roman story, Alfred was in his days, when wars had ceased, and there was peace in our borders, and he could turn his thoughts to letters.

Principio nimium promtos ad bella Quirites
Molliri placuit jure deûmque metu.
Inde datæ leges, ne firmior omnia posset :
Cœptaque sunt pure tradita sacra coli.
Exuitur feritas, armisque potentius æquum est :
Et cum cive pudet conseruisse manus.
Atque aliquis, modo trux, visa jam vertitur ara ;
Vinaque dat tepidis salsaque farra focis.

There is something which touches one at once, and comes home, when we read that the fierce barbarian was civilised at the sight of an altar.

Such thoughts kept running through my head, and it was natural to compare days gone by with present times. Suddenly, as I was day-dreaming, my Talking Friend broke silence in his rustling way, and he said, 'The sense of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers may have been something coarse, but, notwithstanding all our wildness and all our rusticity, we had our virtues—for instance, HOSPITALITY. No wayfarer ever visited these parts by the Rea-side, if his errand was peace, without receiving all we had to give—little, it is true, but given with a full heart and with such a welcome as is even now only to be met with in our own country when we drink to

All Friends round the Wrekin!

And I bethought me how, in the fearful Indian mutiny, when some few met together who, as boys, had ascended the old mountain together, they were the foremost, if they could be, in the fight, and steeled to all endurance and suffering and they said, not without tears, and with a mournful cheerfulness, such as becomes the brave in battle, 'The old country shall never hear any harm of us—let's drink the health of

All Friends round the Wrekin!

Nationality will always show itself, and it was in this same mutiny, and during the Oude campaign, that a Scotch private, who had fewer clothes on than usual, having had them torn from his back in a charge down a jungle, was heard repeating the simple lines of Burns:

> The rough bur-thistle spreading wide
> Among the bearded bear,
> I turned the weeder-clip aside,
> And spared the symbol dear!

And as I gazed again upon the storm-stained bole and branches of the aged Oak, it was natural to muse upon the numbers who, in his time, had gone forth to the battle and

had never returned—and how many had passed under his shade to their last resting-place in the old churchyard at Hanwood close by. What indeed is time—when we look upon a tree of centuries—but, as one said, 'a parenthesis clasped on both sides by eternity'?

Your heads must come
To the cold tomb:
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.

As for the Old Oak himself, my pleasant Talking Friend, knotted and gnarled, and grey with the lichen of ages, he only might have said, as the Omomborombonga tree of Damara is made to say:

Centuries affect me but little,
The elements assail me unavailably;
In short, my age is a page
In time's Being.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT THE OLD OAK'S TIME-HONOURED FATHER HEARD ABOUT THE DRUIDS ON HIS ASKING AFTER THE MINES IN THE DISTRICTS OF SHELVE, MINSTERLEY, AND PONTESBURY.

> This once our clemency shall spare your groves,
> If at our call ye yield the British king:
> Yet learn, when next ye aid the foes of Cæsar,
> That each old oak whose solemn gloom ye boast,
> Shall bow beneath our axes.
>
> MASON'S *Caractacus.*

Disciplina in Britannia reperta atque inde in Galliam translata esse existimatur; et nunc, qui diligentius eam rem cognoscere volunt, plerumque illo discendi causa proficiscuntur.—CÆSAR, *De Bello Gallico*, lib. vi. ch. 13.

The majority of the Britons were professing Christians, and had sent bishops to the councils on the Continent. But the Druidism, which yet had its regular temples in Bretagne, was lingering in some corners of the island, and was still, by its traditions and mysticisms, materially affecting the minds of the British bards of that period.—TURNER'S *Anglo-Saxons*, Book X. ch. i. vol. iii. 471.

> These holy groves
> Permit no exclamation 'gainst Heaven's will
> To violate their echoes.
>
> MASON'S *Caractacus.*

THE Old Oak was now out in full leaf—more than that, had made the most vigorous midsummer shoots, so that the shade of it, 'not perceable with power of any star,' as Spenser translates the old Latin line, was acceptable on the sultriest day to man and beast—indeed, nothing was to be compared with the sombre gloominess of his shade, unless perhaps one might instance some myriad-leaved maple—such as may be seen in Arundel Park—in a season when there has been abundance of rain, and St. Swithun has not forgotten his calling.

It was on this occasion and at this time that my Talking

Friend said, 'This shade was such as would delight a Druid, and they did well to call themselves Druids from *Derw*—the oak of their native land. Perhaps some will maintain that this is not so, and that Gaul is the place of their birth; but whether so or not the Romans found them here, and found it no easy matter to displace them. Of this *Tirmon*, the land of Mona, or *Ynis Dowyll*—that is, the shady island—our *Moneg*, or the Angles' *Engles-ea*, which is *Anglesey*, is witness. Do I not recollect you, as a boy, in 1824, sitting under my branches and reading a book you called "The Agricola," comparing it with another book you called "The Annals"? And was it not pleasant to my old heart of Oak that the scions of the old house should sleep under my shade when tired of their books, their fishing, or their sports?' To which he added, 'Little as you may think it, the venerable tree, my father, recollected well an old man called Tredithic, who said he was the descendant of a Druid, though now a Christian. It was from this old man he gained all his knowledge of how the Romans worked the mines at Shelve, if not at Minsterley and Pontesbury. But I see you are drowsy, and I shall stop.' And the Old Oak—to use a modern phrase—*shut up*, but not without a pleasant murmur in his leaves and branches, which shook the sleeping mistletoe.

It was a pleasant thing to hear the Old Oak's speech, and equally so to turn to one's Tacitus once more, and to read in the 'Annals,' A.D. 61, how Suetonius Paulinus obtained the government of Britain, and sought to retrieve the ravages of the Britons who had visited the Romans with a heavy carnage, by 'falling upon the island of Anglesea, powerful in inhabitants, and a common refuge to the revolters and fugitives. He built, for that end, boats with broad flat bottoms, the easier to approach a shore full of shallows and uncertain landings; upon these the foot were embarked: the horse fording after them, or when they found themselves out of their depth, swimming their horses. On the opposite shore stood the enemy's army, compact with men and arms: amongst them were women, running frantically to and fro, resembling the wild transports of furies, dismally clad in funeral apparel, their hair dishevelled, and torches in their

hands. Round that host also appeared their priests the Druids, with their hands lifted up to heaven, uttering bitter and direful imprecations, and from the strangeness of the spectacle struck the spirit of the Roman soldiers with great dismay; insomuch that, as if all their hearts had been benumbed, they stood motionless, with their bodies exposed, like marks, to wounds and darts, till, by the repeated exhortations of the general, as well as by mutual incitements from one another, they were at last roused to shake off the scandalous terror inspired by a band of raving women and fanatic priests; and thus advancing their ensigns, they discomfited all that resisted, and involved them in their own fires. A garrison was thereafter established over the vanquished, and the groves cut down by them dedicated to detestable superstitions; for there they sacrificed captives, and, in order to discover the will of the gods, consulted the entrails of men; practices of cruelty by them accounted holy.'

Some twenty years after this we read in the 'Agricola' that that excellent man and general 'conceived a design to rescue the Isle of Anglesey, a conquest from which Paulinus was recalled by the general revolt of Britain, as above I have recounted (i.e. in chap. xiv.). But, as this council was suddenly concerted, and therefore ships were found wanting, such was the firmness and capacity of the general, that without ship he transported his men. From the auxiliaries he detached all their chosen men, such as knew the fords, and, according to the usage of their country, were dexterous in swimming, so as, in the water, at once to manage themselves and their horses and arms. These, unencumbered with any of their baggage, he caused to make a descent and onset so sudden that the enemy were quite struck with consternation, as men who apprehended nothing but a fleet and transports and a formal invasion by sea, and now believed no enterprise difficult and insurmountable to such as came thus determined to war. Thus they sued for peace, and even surrendered the island; and thence Agricola was already considered as a very great and even a renowned commander.'[1]

[1] Tacit. *Agric.* c. xviii.

Such were the passages which the garrulity of my Old Friend called to my remembrance; and being struck with his desire to speak of the Druids, not many days after I asked him if he could recall his time-honoured father's reminiscences of old Tredithic, whom he had mentioned.

'Many and many a time,' replied my Talking Friend, 'in years now long past, did my father talk of old Tredithic, and he spoke of him as an ancient Briton, or one of the Cymry. His original home was Anglesea, as we now call that sacred island, and he had left it with others in search of the mines about Shelve, where he continued for many years, then migrated to Minsterley, and in his latter days had a hut, or homestead, under the craggy side of Ponsert Hill, which overlooks the old manor of the oaks. A very old man indeed was Tredithic when my father was but an oakling, and his strange, wild appearance, and his hoary hair, which floated like a meteor over his shoulders, together with his extraordinary stories, made a great impression on the Old Oak. As far as I can recollect, he told my father that he and his family could trace themselves back to the Druids—likely enough, you will say, as you laugh in your sleeve at Welsh extraction and genealogies which rival those of Spain. Be that as it may, he stated that there were *Fraternities* in his days, and certain youths were constantly sent forth throughout the counties of North and South Wales in search of metals—and even beyond, as far as Shropshire, Staffordshire, and Warwick. All people, he said, of his *caste* were skilled in mining, and unless I am greatly mistaken he spoke of copper having been found in Anglesea from the very earliest times—I think in the *Trysclwyn* mountain, or table-land, better known now by the name of *Mynydd-y-Trysclwyn*. Under pressure at home, and to mend their fortunes, Tredithic and several others went forth to seek for mineral. What became of most of his companions Tredithic never knew. One only visited him, years after, in his haunt under Ponsert Hill, who told him that he had seen *black fuel* dug out of the ground broadcast near Wrexham. He was then on his return to Anglesea. As for Tredithic himself, he married and settled, after he left Shelve, and the lead works

there, on the craggy side, as I said before, of Ponsert Hill, and constantly rested under my time-honoured father's shade as he passed backwards and forwards on his visits to what he never called by any other name than Pengwern—Scrobbesbyrig, that is, or Shrewsbury.

'"The Fraternities" of the Druids reminded my venerable father of those of the Anglo-Saxons, and he would say that in his long life he never knew any good come of a relaxation in concord and unity, and he would illustrate this in his own way by saying, "Look to any clearances in our own oak forests, and observe how the trees exposed to wind and weather pine and dwindle away."

'One point my old father constantly maintained, and that was that old Tredithic knew as much as all the country besides, and he was led to believe that he had picked up this knowledge from having been, as he said, associated with the ancient Druids of Anglesea. And the old man told him more than once that when he was a boy the tradition of the Druids' great knowledge still remained amongst the people. Nothing could be done without them. In civil matters their influence was great; in religious matters it was supreme. Such learning as there was in those days pretty much centred in them, and when few comparatively could write they read the letters of the Greeks. No sacrifice, no offering, neither prayer nor thanksgiving, was thought to be rightly performed without their assistance. They only were versed in the knowledge of the stars and in general science; and probably, though they were the teachers of the youth, they took care that the youths should be chiefly of their own class. Free from taxes and military service, their persons were considered sacred, and they were presided over by an Arch-Druid. Such, it is reported, was his solemn state and high position that many nobles sought it, and sent members of their households to be enrolled in the Fraternity. What their revenues were is not clear, but you may be sure they had a full share in all offerings, and lands and possessions for their sacred colleges, when the three orders were collected together—the Bards, the Vates, and the Druids, as they were called by way of distinction.

'Nothing delighted my father so much as to hear from old Tredithic the great veneration in which they held the Oak. The old man, indeed, maintained that they were called *Derwyddon* from the British *Derw*. Then, again, my worthy sire would listen with the utmost attention when the story was told him of the mistletoe, or all-healing, which, when found on the oak, was to be cut with the golden knife by the hands of the officiating Druid, clad in white, and which was not to touch the ground, but to be caught in a woollen cloth below. The sacrifice of the two white bulls he thought little about, but all that related to the oak and the mistletoe he caught at at once; and I recollect his saying that since the introduction of Christianity the mistletoe was not so commonly found on the oak as used to be the case in those heathenish and pagan times.

'Amongst other things, old Tredithic stood up for the religious knowledge of the Druids to a certain extent—so far, at least, as this: to the acknowledgment of One Supreme God. He added, moreover, that they held to the immortality of the soul, and that the doctrine of what they called the transmigration of souls was but a subtle invention, and brought in by those who wished to make a traffic in religion, and loved disputation. And upon my time-honoured father saying, "He wondered how a people who knew so much could have made those wicker-work images of immense size, filling them with living men, and burning them alive; and not thieves and robbers only, but in case of need, the guiltless too," the old man replied, "None but those who have lived in the midst of heathendom can, I suppose, fathom the deep mystery of iniquity."

'On another occasion, Tredithic told the Old Oak, my father, that, by general report, the old Druids were very particular about letting out what they knew, and what were their secret (i.e. esoteric) doctrines. As for their cruel and abominable rites, which it is well known they used, they said they were, for the most part, exercised on their enemies. For themselves, when they acted up to their religion, they maintained that they were the teachers of their tribes; and putting everything together, there is some reason for thinking

they were so. "At the same time," added the venerable man of Druidical descent, "morality was at a low ebb, and domestic institutions never held any honourable and humanising place till Christianity came in. The very best parts of Druidism were radically bad in and of themselves. All that was good in it was simply that portion of natural religion which has never quite been driven out of the world by the every-day sinfulness of generation after generation!"'

Meanwhile my Talking Friend was hushed to silence, and I had time to call to mind those passages of Lucan which had interested me as a boy. That relative to the sacred grove of Marseilles—one may almost see the thick-plighted leaves!—

Lucus erat longo nunquam violatus ab ævo, &c.—

must be passed by with a mere reference, but it is applicable to any Druidical grove, and quite worth the reading, difficult as is Lucan's style; but the other, which speaks of the Bards and Druids, must be given at length:

Vos quoque qui fortes animas belloque peremtas
Laudibus in longum vates dimittitis ævum,
Plurima securi fudistis carmina Bardi.
Et vos barbaricos ritus, moremque sinistrum
Sacrorum Druidæ positis repetistis ab armis.
Solis nosse deos et cœli numina vobis,
Aut solis nescire datum. Nemora alta remotis
Incolitis lucis. Vobis auctoribus umbræ
Non tacitas Erebi sedes, Ditisque profundi
Pallida regna petunt: regit idem spiritus artus
Orbe alio: longæ (canitis si cognita) vitæ
Mors media est. Certe populi, quos despicit Arctos,
Felices errore suo, quos ille timorum
Maximus, haud urget leti metus. Inde ruendi
In ferrum mens prona viris, animæque capaces
Mortis, et ignavum redituræ parcere vitæ.

Once read, one is not likely to forget a passage like this. I had read it, most likely, under the Old Oak in my boyhood, and I am inclined to think that the words of the historian Henry are about the best comment on the latter part of it.

'The secret doctrines of the Druids, and of all those different orders of priests, were more agreeable to primitive

tradition and right reason than their public doctrines; as they were not under any temptation in their private schools to conceal or disguise the truth. There is abundant evidence that the Druids taught the doctrines of the immortality of the souls of men; and Mela tells us that this was one of their secret doctrines, which they were permitted to publish for political rather than religious reasons. "There is one thing which they teach their disciples, which had been made known to the common people, in order to render them more brave and fearless: viz. that souls are immortal, and that there is another life after the present." Cæsar and Diodorus say, that the Druids taught the Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls into other bodies. This was, perhaps, their public doctrine on this subject, as being most level to the gross conceptions of the vulgar. But others represent them as teaching that the soul after death ascended into some higher orb, and enjoyed a more sublime felicity. This was probably their private doctrine and real sentiments.'

There was again a rustling in the leaves of the Oak, and I prepared to listen. '"Of Tredithic," my venerable father would say, "the people used to tell strange stories. He was certainly the *wise man* of the district. But what seemed to strike the neighbours more than anything else was, his habit of singing periodically the wildest of all wild songs from the loftiest crags of Ponsert Hill, whilst at others he would accompany himself in the valley beneath on his harp in strains so soft and low that the little stream which flowed beneath murmured scarce so musically. I have no doubt in my own *oakhead*," or, as you would say, *mind*, "that Tredithic himself belonged to that division of the Druids, by extraction as he spoke, called the BARDS. Certainly his very soul was tuned to harmony, and strange as he was at times and eccentric, I cannot say that I ever liked to hear anyone talk so much beneath my shade as I did this descendant of the Druids. But, perhaps, this may be attributed somewhat to his reverence for the oak tribe in general, to say nothing of his friendship for me in particular. When he lighted those secret and mysterious fires on the first of May, to say nothing of those of Yule-tide and Midsummer, which also were a continual subject of inquiry

amongst his neighbours, he was never known to use the wood of the oak." '

And having said, like as in a whisper, 'Strange, very strange, how fond my father was of old Tredithic!' my friend again ceased speaking.

A day or two after the Old Oak reverted again to the history of Tredithic, 'who constantly spoke of himself as originally led into these districts in search of mineral, and told my venerable father that people who spoke of the divining rod as made of the rowan were under a great mistake. It was the pagan priests' wands that were made from that tree of power; all divining rods were made from the hazel. He admitted, however, that some pretenders to the art used both ash and willow forks, but such as did so were not either Celts or Druids of pure extraction. Very mysterious was Tredithic when he spoke of the divining rod.

'Another point he used to speak of with great solemnity under the title of *foreshadow*, by which was meant an intimation of something which was about to happen untowardly. Good fortune, as far as I can recollect, was never intimated beforehand; it was bad luck only to which the *foreshadow* had reference, that those whom it befell might be able to bear it the better. A great many years ago, at least 'tis sixty years since, a footsore Scotchman sought shelter under my boughs, and I heard him say despairingly, "I should hae kenned this lang before had I regarded the token of the second sight;" and I came to the conclusion that this must have been something like Tredithic's *foreshadow*. It reminded me of the *scin-cræft*, *scin-lac*, and *scin-læcan* of our Saxon forefathers, which was always connected with something ghostly.

'Upon one occasion my venerable father recollected saying, half-joke, half-earnest, to Tredithic (it was after one of his Bardic *réveillées* on Ponsert Hill, still early one midsummer morning), that "he verily believed he had something of the old Druid in him still." A deep sense of melancholy seemed all at once to come over the wrinkled weather-beaten face of the old man, as he replied, "One cannot but revert at times to the traditions—even to the errors—of our forefathers almost with tears; and," he added, "when I was a child in *Tir*

Môn I very well recollect an aged man amongst our people who said, 'In my grandfather's time there were Druids still, both here and in the fastnesses of Carnedd David and Carnedd Llewelyn, but they did not show themselves. They were looked upon, however, as oracular old men, and were much consulted; men to pronounce decrees and orations to the people from the sacred *Gorseddan*, and who left their name behind them on *Cerrig y Druidion*, or the stones of the Druids.' The old man I speak of was at this time all but blind (he said other Bards had been so), yet was he listened to with the most devout attention. The last words I ever heard him utter were these, which will tell you the fount of those tears which will start in an old man's eyes when he recollects *Ynys Dewyll* and its oaken shade: 'Our times are passing away, swift as the dark and wizard waters of the Dee, and soon there will be no Druids left. New lights are rising on the horizon—better, far better, lights than ours. And yet we have not been the cruel barbarians some have represented us. The rites of darkness were cruel, and the habitations of darkness were cruel; but our education taught us to temper those rites at the risk of our own lives, and many a time and oft, when some horrid rite was to be accomplished, we stepped in and saved the victim, either by a rocking stone or by some ordeal which nowadays is called a superstitious usage; whereas in our hands it was a mercy and a herald of mercy.' These, or like to these, were the last words I ever heard the old man speak," said Tredithic, "and old as I am, I would travel again afoot from Posentesburh to *Môn Mam Gymry*" (i.e. Môn, the Nanny of Wales) "to hear them again."'

I had been reading the letters of St. Jerome, and I at once called to mind those words of his to Heliodorus: '*Bessorum feritas, et pellitorum turba populorum, qui mortuorum quondam inferiis homines immolabant, stridorem suum in dulce crucis melos fregerunt, et totius mundi una vox Christus est.*' The passage should be understood with the same allowance as that of St. Paul to the Romans, '*Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world*;' but it is so small thing that the horrid clamour of idolatry, and that the noise of the heathen sacrifices, which did but drown the suffering cries of

humanity, should be lulled and stilled and swallowed up in the happy sound of CHRIST CRUCIFIED!

In dwelling upon the history of those who in the midst of sights unholy were not necessarily, all of them, unholy themselves, the poor Scotchman above alluded to would have looked up from the Old Oak northwards to his Caledonia, or Hills of Hazel, and have thought of Armstrong's 'Good Night':

> This night is my departing night,
> For here nae longer must I stay;
> There is neither friend nor foe o' mine
> But wishes me away.
>
> What I have done through lack of wit,
> I never, never, can recall;
> I hope ye 're a my friends as yet,
> Good night, and joy be wi' you all!

Rightly or not, I have often thought of the ministration of the Druids in this light; and, as all men have their call, so, I think the Druids had. Those read in the works of Clement of Alexandria, will recollect how in his 'Hortatory Address' his object was to convert those he appealed to from their heathenism to Christianity; and how again in his 'Stromata' he describes the Greek philosophy as a gift from heaven, and a schoolmaster to lead on that wisdom-loving people to a better knowledge. So with the Druids; they perhaps, by their exhortations, and by their colleges and fraternities, strove to reclaim a wild and barbarous people to better thoughts, rallying with ordeals and divers sorts of superstitious rites, till present indignation and wrath had room to pass by, and mercy found an entrance into the hearts of a barbarous rabble. It is not impossible that the dreadful excommunication of the Druids was originally denounced with a view to the saving of human life; though at the same time, if history be true, human sacrifices were common. Not improbably Wordsworth took this view of the case in his Sonnet on Druidical Excommunication:

> Mercy and love have met thee on the road,
> Thou wretched outcast, from the gift of fire
> And food cut off by sacerdotal ire,
> From every sympathy that man bestowed!

Yet shall it claim our reverence that to God,
Ancient of Days ! that to the Eternal Sire,
These jealous ministers of law aspire,
As to the one sole fount whence wisdom flowed,
Justice and order. Tremblingly escaped,
As if with prescience of the coming storm,
That intimation when the stars were shaped ;
And still, mid yon thick woods, the primal truth
Glimmers through many a superstitious form
That fills the soul with unavailing ruth.

'It was on one midsummer's eve,' said my Talking Friend, 'that my venerable father told me of some superstitions which Tredithic still retained in a *mild form*, mentioning, amongst others, the Fire-kindling on the first of May, by no means to be confounded with the Midsummer and Christmas ones. This fire Tredithic always had kindled, and through it he drove the few sheep and kids which he maintained on Ponsert Hill side. As soon as this fire was kindled, after the old Celtic custom, by wood friction, the fire in his cottage was put out ; and after the animals of the household had undergone their fire ordeal, which was to preserve them from infection and distempers the ensuing year, the fire on the hearth was lighted afresh from the virgin flame. Often did old Tredithic speak of this Druidical custom, and, as far as my father knew, he never altogether relinquished it. There was something cheerful, he would say, in the brightness of such flames, and I dare say the terms *Beltane fire* and *Bonfire*, which have descended to our times, have something in common with this old usage. Considering the Druids' love of fresh fire, it is remarkable that they had a dread of lightning, and whenever a heavy storm came on, Tredithic always placed a wooden cross at his open door by way of protection. It was an awful sight, he would say, to see every crag and spike of rock on Ponsert Hill side alight with the fires of heaven, and it did a man good, at such a time, to look upon the Cross! And, speaking of thunder-storms, I must not omit to add that Tredithic had in his possession several curious stones, which he called thunder stones (you, I think, now call them *belemnites*), and he had often told my father that no storm could be over till one of these thunder stones, or thunderbolts, had

fallen. By their fall, or *birth*, as he styled it, the womb of the cloud was relieved and the electric matter dissipated.

'Nor was this the only curious stone the old man had in his possession. He had a dozen or more of the adder stone, or, as he sometimes designated it, egg; or, when speaking familiarly with his friends the Cymry, *Glain Naidr*; and he used to add that years ago he had seen great quantities of these glass Druid rings (so the people named them) at Aberfraw—indeed, he had made a journey there, if not specially to see them, yet to see them and an old cromlech not far off. And, when telling of these things, my venerable father would sum up with a shake of all his leaves, and say, "Never was such an old antiquary as Tredithic; the moment he heard of anything curious he became restless, and was on the gad, and he never settled down again, if within reach, till he had seen it. When he passed away I missed his conversation more than that of anyone I can remember. He was the last link that connected very old and modern days."'

And my Talking Friend was silent once more, and I had time to think over some of the curious superstitions he had alluded to.

That of the *fresh fire* was, no doubt, Druidical; but it belonged, as I suppose, to the Celts in general, as well as to all the Teutonic race, and is well known under the different heads—*heedfire*, *hýdfýr*, and *hothfeuer*. It has been called into requisition within the memory of man in England, and the use of it in Scotland has never been extinct. In a recent publication we are told that, in case of heavy trouble, either in their own households or amongst their flocks, there was kindled what afterwards, in Caithness, was called the '*heed-fire*'; and one's attention is arrested, and one thinks at once of the old fire-worshippers and the soothsayers from the East. It is a notable remark of Pliny's, when speaking of the superstitions and cruel vanities which Tiberius Cæsar put down in Gaul, and is, I think, of wide acceptation as regards Britain: 'Britannia hodieque eam attonite celebrat tantis cærimoniis, ut dedisse Persis videri possit.' The abominable custom of human sacrifice was not the only superstitious usage referred to, but I think 'art magic' in general.

To be awestruck in a thunderstorm is not peculiar to Tredithic. The man who is not moved by the artillery of heaven, when the voice of the thunder is heard out of its secret place, and the lightning shines upon the ground, is duller than the earth on which he treads; for, as the Psalmist speaks, '*the earth was moved and shook withal.*' With the superstition attached to the thunder stone we have nothing to do; that is entirely another matter, and appears to have been widely spread, or Shakespeare had not called it 'the all-dreaded thunder-stone.' In fact, as Mr. Mantell says in his 'Wonders of Geology,' 'Among the innumerable relics of marine animals which occur in the secondary deposits, there are none which have excited so much curiosity, and given rise to so many conjectures as to their nature and origin, as the fossils termed *belemnites* by geologists, and which are generally known as *thunderbolts*. These are long, cylindrical, or fusiform stones, more or less pointed at one extremity, and having at the other or larger end a conical cavity, which is either occupied by a chambered cell, or fitted up with the clay, sand, or stone, in which the *belemnite* happens to be embedded. The substance of these bodies is invariably calcareous spar, of a radiated structure. These bodies were the osselets of cephalopods allied to the *Sepia*, which possessed an ink-bag, mandibles, large eyes, and arms furnished with acetabula or suckers, and slender, elongated hooks.' Such was the dreaded thunder stone, potted down, like Pompeii, for posterity. As for good old Tredithic, he was one to have asked with Casca:

> Who ever knew the heavens menace so?

than to have made answer with Cassius:

> Those that have known the earth so full of faults.
> For my part, I have walk'd about the streets,
> Submitting me unto the perilous night;
> And, thus unbraced, Casca, as you see,
> Have bared my bosom to the thunder stone:
> And when the cross blue lightning seem'd to open
> The breast of heaven, I did present myself
> Even in the aim and very flash of it.
> *Casca.* But wherefore did you so much tempt the heavens?
> It is the part of men to fear and tremble
> When the most mighty gods, by tokens, send
> Such dreadful heralds to astonish us.

The adder stone, or snake egg, which old Tredithic treasured up amongst his curiosities, is well known to all Welsh antiquaries, and all scholars know of it from the celebrated passage in Pliny's 'Natural History.' The following passage from the Additions to Camden gives all information. 'Near the barn of Aberfraw Palace are frequently found the *Glain Naidr*, or Druid glass rings. Of those the vulgar opinion in Cornwall and most parts of Wales is that they are produced through all Cornwall by snakes joining their heads together and hissing, which form in a kind of bubble like a ring about the head of one of them, which the rest, by continual hissing, blow on till it comes off at the tail, when it immediately hardens, and resembles a glass ring. Whosoever found it, was to prosper in all his undertakings. These rings are called *Glain Nadroedh*, or *gemmæ anguinæ*. *Glâne*, in Irish, signifies glass. In Monmouthshire they are called *Maen Magl*, and corruptly, *Glaim* for *Glain*. They are small glass amulets, commonly about half as wide as our finger rings, but much thicker, usually of a green colour, though some are blue, and others curiously waved with blue, red, and white.' It seems very likely that those snake stones, as we call them, were used as charms or amulets among our Druids of Britain on the same occasion as the snake eggs among the Gaulish Druids. For Pliny, who lived when these priests were in request, and saw one of their snake eggs, gives the same account of the origin of them as our common people do of their *Glain Naidr*. 'There is,' says the naturalist, 'a kind of egg in great repute in Gaul, disregarded by the Greeks. A great number of snakes in summer, rolling together, form themselves into a kind of mass with the saliva of their mouths and froth of their bodies, and produce what is called the *anguinum*, or snake's egg. The Druids say, this, by their hissing, is borne up into the air, and must be caught in a mantle before it reaches the earth. The person who catches it must escape on horseback, for the snakes will pursue him till stopped by a river. The proof of it is if it floats against the stream even when set in gold. As the magicians know how to conceal their secret arts, they pretend it must be caught in a certain period of the moon, as if it were in the

power of man to influence that operation of the snakes. I have seen one of these eggs, about the size of a small round apple, covered with a cartilaginous crust like the claws of the arms of the polypus, and used as a Druidical symbol. It is said to be wonderfully efficacious in promoting the success of lawsuits, and procuring favourable audience of princes, insomuch that I am well assured a Roman knight among the Vocontii was put to death by the late Emperor Claudius merely for having one of these in his bosom at a trial.' Such is the account in Pliny. It may be added from these Additions to Camden: 'As for Pliny's *ovum anguinum*, it can be no other than a shell (marine or fossil) of the kind we call *Echinus marinus*, whereof one sort, though not the same he describes, is found at this day in most parts of Wales, where they are called *Wyeu'r mor*, or sea eggs.' The superstitious use of the *Glain Naidr* still remained in Pennant's time, but in a modified degree, being used only to assist children in cutting their teeth, or to cure the chin cough, or drive away the ague. When I was a boy, the Welsh children about the Snowdon range used to follow you, crying out '*Crystāl Snowdōn, crystāl Snowdōn*,' some having half a dozen cubes of glass, and some more, in their aboriginal British baskets. Are these the last remnants of the *Glain Naidr*?

Before the chapter closes something must be said, or there will be something missing, of the 'CROMLECHS,' to which old Tredithic attached so much consequence; several of which in my younger days I have visited with an old Welsh friend, above alluded to as the Greek translator of Caractacus, who used to look upon them with, perhaps, as much awe as did the venerable Tredithic.

And I may note first, that under one name or another, and in one shape or another, they are found very widely extended. For example, a plate of one is given in Cleghorn's 'Forests and Gardens of South India.' It was met with in Coimbatore, and consisted of four immense stones—the upright slabs about five and a half feet high, and the covering stone eleven by five feet. Charles Beke again meets with a cromlech after passing Mahanaim—reports it to the 'Athenæum,' where it is recorded February 15, 1862. Nor is

America, if reports be true, to be passed by, as mention is made of a cromlech of considerable size, to be found at North Salem, New York.

Of cromlechs in general, sacred in the eyes of Tredithic, it may be recollected that they are generally in an inclining position, and the Cymry maintain always that the upper stone is an altar. Others deny this, saying that cromlechs are merely sepulchral memorials ; perhaps confounding them with what are called kistvaens, found generally in barrows and caves. And if it be said that bodies have been sometimes found under them, it may imply no more, in Mr. Fosbroke's opinion, than the chance burial of some sick person who had come for cure, and had failed at the spot. 'For in a village of Wales,' says Pennant, 'called Llandagla, sick people get under the Communion table, lie down with the Bible under their heads, are covered with the carpet or cloth, and remain there till break of day.' In another place he remarks that bones have been found under many kistvaens, but none under cromlechs. Sir Walter Scott, I think, in the 'Lord of the Isles,' points to a very clear distinction :

> He crossed his brow beside the stone
> Where Druids erst heard victims groan ;
> And at the cairns upon the wild,
> O'er many a heathen hero pil'd,
> He breathed a timid prayer for those
> Who died ere Shiloh's sun arose.

The celebrated Welsh antiquary, Mr. John Davis, in speaking of cromlechs in the Additions to Camden, says, 'They are thought to have received their name from the convexity or gibbosity of the upper stone—the word *Kown,* signifying crooked or gibbous, and *Llech* any flat stone ;' and it may be so.

The largest and most entire cromlech in the whole Principality is to be found behind Plâs Newydd in the Isle of Anglesea. I give the description of it in Lloyd's Topographical Notices appended to Caradoc of Llancarvan's 'History of Wales.' 'Behind the house are to be seen two vast cromlechs : the upper stone of one is twelve feet seven inches long, twelve feet broad, and four feet thick, supported by five

small stones; the other is but barely separated from the first, is almost a square of five feet and a half, and is supported by four stones. The number of supporters to cromlechs is merely accidental, and depends on the size and form of the incumbent stone. These are the most magnificent we have, and the highest from the ground, for a middle-sized horse may easily pass under the largest. Not far from the cromlech is a *carnedd*; part has been removed, and within was discovered a cell, about seven feet long and three wide, covered at top with two flat stones, and lined on the sides with others.'

The mention of *carnedd* or *carneddau*, as the Cymry speak, at once calls off the attention from *sacrificial* to *hore* or *hoar*, that is, *mere* stones or stones of *memorial*; and one that shall have slept in Snowdonia, and then climbed to the summit of Carnedd Llewelyn or Carnedd Davydd, as my dear old friend (John Price, the Greek translator of Caractacus) and I did, will never forget that sight at sunrise. How grand was the view, and how the sun seemed to flash upon the bare bright felspar! Next to Snowdon, these are the two highest peaks on the Arvonian range; Carnedd Llewelyn, indeed, has competed for the supremacy; but, I believe, we may say, in the words of Lord Byron, when Monte Rosa made a like claim:

> Mont Blanc is the monarch of mountains,
> We crowned him long ago!

And so, the eagle rocks, and the snowy cliffs, and the double peak of Snowdon still hold their own, and I rejoice with him who is at the summit at sunrise, whence, if he does not, he *may* see when the air is clear, the MEN, or the MAN, on the Cambrian mountains—the *carnedds* or *carneddau* of the north, now, as in Wales, used for signals and telegraphic signs, or for shelter from the inclemency of the weather; but formerly heaped up as memorials of their great worthies, to be seen afar off and to be remembered. Such were the high-standing stones which marked Egil Ulsærk's grave, as we read in the Saga of Hakon the Good. In the original Icelandic of the Heimskringla, 'Háver bautasteinar standa hia hangi Egils Ulsærks.' I quote them for the love of Denmark, and in memory of Copenhagen's hospitalities.

Curious how all times have their characteristic marks, and how all countries have their rude consecrated and unconsecrated stones. 'On some graves,' says Mr. Williams in his 'Fiji Islands,' 'I have seen large cairns of stones, which are sometimes set up also to mark the spot where a man has died.' And once more the words of Mason's Caractacus suggest themselves:

> Arviragus! my bold, my breathless boy,
> Thou hast escap'd such pity; thou art free.
> Here in high Mona shall thy noble limbs
> Rest in a noble grave; posterity
> Shall to thy tomb with annual reverence bring
> Sepulchral stones, and pile them to the clouds.

The curious fact to the antiquary and the historian is this, that these stones bear a double sense and usage. They are a memorial, as we have seen, and then again they are the record of a curse. So on throwing stones on a miscreant's grave, the Cymry say, '*Kaern ar dy ben*' ('a heap on the head'): that is to say, '*Ill betide thee.*' And in this we see the origin of the saying, still common, of throwing stones at a person or of throwing stones on a person's memory; though, perhaps, we do not arrive at the origin of it.

On the other hand, even to the present day, the Cumbrian and Westmoreland peasant or *statesman*—as the little holder is technically called—will, as he passes, add a stone to 'THE MAN,' however great his haste. And one calls to mind those lines of Horace, learnt as a repetition:

> Quamquam festinas (non est mora longa) licebit
> Injecto ter pulvere curras—

And so in Scotland, each, as if some way or another influenced by the old Roman idea—

> Quisque suos patimur Manes—

as he passes the cairn, throws his stone, and adds to the heap. As Pennant relates in his voyage to the Hebrides: 'To this moment there is a proverbial expression among the Highlanders allusive to the old practice. A suppliant will tell his patron, "*Curri mi clocher docharne*" ("I will add a stone to your cairn"), meaning, "when you are no more, I will do all

possible honour to your memory."' Thus we have the two extremes—the memorial and the curse—which Richards, in his 'Antiquæ Linguæ Britannicæ Thesaurus,' thus attempts to account for, acquiescing seemingly in the words of a brother antiquary—under the word *Carn*, mere, arrant; *Carn leidr*, a most notorious thief; *Carn fradwyr*, the worst of traitors, &c. E. Lhwyd accounts for those expressions in the following manner. He supposes those large heaps of stones called in South Wales *carnan*, and in North Wales *carneddau*, which are common upon mountains in Wales, to have been, in the times of heathenism, intended as memorials of the dead. He thinks that men of the greatest quality had such sepulchral monuments before Christianity was introduced; but since the planting of Christianity they became so detestable and appropriated to malefactors, that sometimes the most passionate wishes a man can express to his enemy is, that a *carn* may be his monument—*Carn er dy wyneb*—and thus the most notorious and profligate criminal came to be distinguished by that word.' It may or it may not be true, and one falls back upon the words of an old Scotch song:

> The rose blooms gay on *cairny* brae
> As weel's in birken shawe;
> And love will lowe in cottage low
> As weel's in lofty ha'.

And this again leads on to other inquiries such as never crossed the mind of old Tredithic. For, not only were stones set up as memorials, as, for instance, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, we have Jacob's pillar at Bethel, and the stones of the heap of witness which '*Laban called Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed*;' and the stonage which Joshua set up in the midst of Jordan, and the stone which Samuel '*took and set up between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us*;' to say nothing of others, many; but they were also royal seats as well as places of justice.

'Lecturi regem,' are the words of Saxo Grammaticus, 'veteres affixis humo saxis insistere suffragiaque promere consueverant, subjectorum lapidum firmitate facti constantiam ominaturi.' Such are the notorious stones, as I recol-

lect, about a German mile from Upsala, called the *Morasten*, which I visited and examined with great delight many years ago—the spot where the great Margaret, the Semiramis of the North, caused the magnates of the land to assemble together and elect Eric of Pomerania (Eric III.) for their king. For, as Mallet words it, 'Cette élection devoit précéder et faciliter l'exécution de son projet favori de l'union perpétuelle des trois royaumes. Elle assembla pour cet effet les états de Suède au lieu nommé MORA-STEN, près d'Upsal, et leur fit elle-même un discours éloquent, où elle s'appliqua à leur prouver combien la réunion des trois royaumes du Nord sous un seul chef les rendroit tranquilles, heureux et redoutables'—which design of this wonderful woman was consummated by the Union of Calmar, the deed of which bears date 'A Calmar l'année 1397, le jour de la fête de Sainte Marguerite.'

Margaret was not a woman to pass by the reverend antiquity and awe of these stones—sacred, in their way, as the old *Liath Fail*, or Stone of Destiny, removed by Fergus from Ireland to Scotland in A.D. 513, for his coronation at Dunstaffnage, and thence to Scone by Kenneth II., and last of all to Westminster Abbey, where it now is, by Edward I., in A.D. 1296. No common stone that, but a stone for kings and queens to sit upon, as they would retain their thrones! Such virtue is there in a coronation stone and in a Stone of Destiny!

Good reader! Were the works of Olaus Magnus, the celebrated Archbishop of Upsal, with the curious plates, ever in thine hands? Never lose the chance of turning over the pictures if it should fall in thy way.

'Passing a Banta-sten'—an upright stone, generally planted in the centre of a stone grave—'which stands upright, pointed towards the heavens, we gained the forest, where, situated among the rocks and pines, is a Domaring, or ancient place of justice, consisting of ten large massive rocks, placed at equal distances in a circle, with an eleventh in the centre for the judge, such as Agamemnon sat upon when he sentenced away the armour of Achilles. Beyond the circle lies a smaller stone, may be for the prisoner. All is so fresh and wild; you

have only to people the forest in your mind's eye with long-bearded Lagmen and wise counsellors.'

But it is time to stop, or one might be led to consider Rock Inscriptions such as Tredithic never could have conceived, or to dwell upon Runes such as would have puzzled him, as they did Olaus Wormius, or anyone but Professor Liljegren, whose 'Ran-Lära' is before me, and who so kindly showed me, thirty years ago, all the mysteries of the Stockholm Museums, from the old *Ranarkjælle* to the wind-knots and the drums of the Lapland witches.

Meanwhile, the lines of Keats are running in my head which speak of—

> Hieroglyphics old
> Which sages and keen-eyed astrologers
> Then living on the earth, with labouring thought
> Won from the gaze of many centuries :
> Now lost, save what we find on remnants huge
> Of stone, or marble swart : their import gone,
> Their wisdom long since fled.

CHAPTER X.

THE OLD ROMANS—AND HOW THEY WORKED THE LEAD MINES OF THE DISTRICT.

Insula inexhaustis Chalybum generosa metallis.
VIRG. *Æn.* x. 174.

Φέρει δὲ σῖτον καὶ βοσκήματα, καὶ χρυσὸν, καὶ ἄργυρον, καὶ σίδηρον.
STRABO, lib. iv. 199, Falckoner.

India neque æs neque plumbum habet, gemmisque suis ac margaritis hæc permutat. Nigro plumbo ad fistulas laminasque utimur, laboriosius in Hispania eruto, totasque per Gallias : sed in Britannia summo terræ corio adeò largè, ut lex ultro dicatur, ne plus certo modo fiat.'—PLIN. *Nat. Hist.* lib. xxxiv. ch. 48.

Pennant, in his *History of Wales*, adduces authentic evidence to prove that the Romans established iron works in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire. Iron foundries existed in Sussex and Kent at a very early period. The iron works in Sussex were not abandoned till 1776.' - DR. HOOK, *Lives of Abps. of Cant.* i. 275.

Master Hodges and his man John
At Uckfield made the first cannon.
Sussex Rhyme.

COAL, I suppose, has been the great wealth of England, for without coals we never could have continued to smelt our iron stone, whence comes the metal which now bridges over the Atlantic, and the Indian Ocean, and the Red Sea, and the vast Pacific ; for what none but the Wilkinsons thought of in days gone by has all come to pass, and beginning from the Severn, where they launched their iron craft, iron vessels have weighed their anchors and have passed from sea to sea, leaving no track behind them in the waste of the waters, as they sailed on in their grandeur and their majesty! Long ago have the lines of the prince of the old Greek tragic poets been applied to the combination of fire and water, unthought of in his days!

Ξυνώμοσαν γὰρ, ὄντες ἔχθιστοι τὸ πρὶν,
πῦρ καὶ θάλασσα.

But it is only as of yesterday that the spirits of the mines have yielded up their dominion over iron, and it falls into the water and it swims, and men do not look upon it as a miracle or think of the prophet's axe that was borrowed!

What in the world would old Tredithic have said had he lived to see such things? Certainly had we had in his time nothing but unsightly iron steamers and butting rams, Milton had never written these lines of mark in the 'Samson Agonistes':

> But who is this, what thing of sea or land?
> Female of sex it seems,
> That so bedekt, ornate, and gay,
> Comes this way sailing
> Like a stately ship
> Of Tarsus, bound for th' isles
> Of Javan or Gadire,
> With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,
> Sails fill'd, and streamers waving,
> Courted by all the winds that hold them play,
> An amber scent of odorous perfume
> Her harbinger, a damsel train behind;
> Some rich Philistian matron may she seem,
> And now at nearer view, no other certain
> Than Dalila thy wife.

Anyone who turns to Kelham's 'Domesday Book' (illustrated) may light upon the words 'BLOMAM FERRI REDD' —'*Renders one blome of iron.*' And yet, as Mr. Hartshorne remarks in his 'Salopia Antiqua,' 'It is very singular that so few notices should occur in the Domesday Survey of the mineral productions of the country. No mention whatever of *tin* occurs in that part of the Survey which relates to Cornwall. But iron is mentioned in four places in Somersetshire, and at *Alwintane* and *Marchelcai* in Herefordshire, and in one place at Gloucestershire, Cheshire, and Lincolnshire. Yet no mention of any minerals or metals in Shropshire and Staffordshire. The *lead works* mentioned in the Survey are almost all upon the King's demesne in Derbyshire. Yet that lead was smelted in Shropshire long anterior to the compilation of this record is sufficiently notorious.' No doubt the truth is pretty well declared in these lines from the commencement of Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle:

For Engelond is ful ynow of fruyt and of tren,
Of wodes and of parkes, that joie it is to sen,
Of foules and of bestes of wylde and tame al so,
Of salt fysch and eche fresch, and fayre riveres ther to.
Of welles swete and colde ynow, of lesen and of mede.
Of selver or and of gold, of tyn and of lede,
Of stel, of yron, and of bras.

Since these lines were written by the old chronicler, whoever he was, vast fortunes have been made from our minerals, and the bowels of the land still contain unknown treasures, which man, as he finds them, will use for weal or woe.

And as I was thinking aloud in this way, there were symptoms of a stir in the branches of my Talking Friend. Something, indeed, there seemed to be of pleasantry in his motions—a chattiness, if I might so say, about him, such as Havelock and old Lord Clyde would indulge in before a fight came off, and they had to show themselves, as the brave use to do, in the battle-front. Indeed, I might have, at the moment, made him use the very words of Tennyson :

Hard wood I am, and wrinkled rind,
And yet my sap was stirred :

And even into my inmost ring
A pleasure I discerned :
Like those blind motions of the spring
That show the year is turned.

And as I knew now from experience when he had something to say, I listened patiently, as men are wont to do who would rather be hearers than speakers.

And my Talking Friend said, with a laughable shake of his leaves, 'I shall never forget how my time-honoured father used to tell of Tredithic and the WISE WOMEN ; and how one of them, once upon a time, said to him, "There are so many foolish men that there must be some wise women, or all would go wrong." Tredithic, indeed, himself asserted that the wise women of his day were really the descendants of the Druidesses, and that they were to be found, more or less, in the wilds of the Stiperstones and Ponsert Hill—all round the Wrekin—about the Clee Hills and Wanlock Edge, and after leaving the Breidden and the Moel-y-Golfa, through-

out all the fastnesses of the Cymry. It was one of these wise women, Tredithic said, who told him how the Romans had worked the lead mines of this district, both at Shelve, under the Stiperstones, and at Snailbech, whence the ore is even yet brought, as you know, to be smelted at Pontesford. No mean bequest, fifty or sixty years ago, was a quarter of an ounce, half an ounce, or an ounce, in those mines! You might suppose that some Roman blood remained in the veins of those who so cleverly divided the *uncia*. Don't be surprised,' interposed my Talking Friend, 'or call me pedant, instead of heart of oak, for I became quite a *Latiner* during the time you and your brothers fell asleep over your Latin and Greek beneath my hospitable shade. Amongst other things that Tredithic told my aged father, on the authority of the wise women, was this: that no miner in these parts who ever stole his butty's tools—our common term for a fellow-labourer—was ever permitted to work in the same district again, but was drummed out like a modern deserter.'

In the latter statement, old Tredithic may have been correct, and possibly the same custom held good here as well as in the Mendip Hills; but I call to mind that it is referred to the latter only in the Additions to Camden, and the passage is worth extracting, even if

The fine new stamp of honour is scarce current.

'The lead in Mendip Hills being melted down into pigs and sows, as the miners call them, is conveyed to Bristol, and thence to many other places. In these mines it is free for any Englishman to work, unless he has forfeited his right by stealing any of the ore or working tools, which the *grovers* (as the miners here are called, and the pits *grooves*) living at some distance frequently leave open on the hills, or only lodged in slight huts. The party convicted of theft is shut up in one of these huts, and dry fern, furze, and other combustibles being put round it and fired, the criminal is at liberty with his hands and feet to break down the hut and make his way out, and be gone; but he must never come to work there again nor have anything more to do among these hills. This they call *burning of the hill*.'

There is a roughish sort of honesty in such a proceeding, and it may have wrought its proper effects; and our ancestors were fond of *pie poudre* justice. Hence that old Devonshire proverb about the law of Lydford:

> First hang and draw,
> Then hear the cause by Lidford law.

And, according to the old ballad, Scarborough Warning looks this same way:

> This term, Scarborow warning, grew (some say)
> By hasty hanging, for rank robbry theare,
> Who that was met, but suspect in that way,
> Straight he war trust up, whatever he weare.

With reference to old Tredithic's mention of the WISE WOMEN, it is not necessary to recount what Mela tells of the Gallicanæ, Barriganæ, or Druidesses, who could raise storms by their verses, change themselves into beasts, heal diseases, and foretell the future; or of their sacred abode in an island of the British sea; enough to admit that they were *cunning women*—a name still remaining amongst us—but inhabitants, it is thought, of the island of Sein, incorrectly called on the maps *Isle de Saints*, which is at the entrance of the bay of Douarnenez, and separated from a point of land on the coast of Brittany—Pointe Raz—by a narrow channel.

The knowledge which, in all ages, has been assigned to what we are taught to call *wise women*, and to that 'something like prophetic strain,' as amongst the ancient Druidesses, is a matter not to be disputed about. Superstition, even yet, adheres to its old rock of offences, and will do so. But when, on another occasion, old Tredithic told of the wonderful knowledge these cunning women had of medicine—mineral as well as vegetable—he spoke to a truth and not a superstition; and one may refer to the words in Cicero's treatise 'De Divinatione,' 'Nihil est autem, quod non longinquitas temporum, excipiente memoria, prodendisque monumentis, efficere atque adsequi possit. Mirari licet, quæ sint animadversa à medicis herbarum genera, quæ radicum ad morsus bestiarum, ad oculorum morbos, ad vulnera; quorum vim atque naturam ratio nunquam explicavit; utilitate et ars est

et inventor probatus.' Minerals and medicine, old Tredithic said always, were the strong points of these wise and cunning women, who in many respects, as far as I could make out from the Old Oak's narrative, resembled the Spaewife of the Scotch, calling to my mind the *Voluspa* of my old Scandinavian friends.

Meanwhile, my attention was again called to the Old Oak:

'Old Tredithic, my father used to say, was perfectly right in all that he had picked up from the "cunning women" about the mines. Their very tools and pigs had been found both at Shelve and at Snailbech; and many a time, as they passed under him on their way, the Saxon miners used to wonder at what they had got hold of. As for the inscriptions, they could make nothing out of them, but my venerable father had often heard Ernuin the priest say they were Roman.'

Whereupon I was obliged to interrupt my Talking Friend, and to tell him how well I recollected the drawing of the tesselated pavement found at the Lea Cross, not far from Pontesford, hanging up all the years of my childhood in what 'THE LAST OF THE OLD SQUIRES' called the Magistrates' Room, and that how, as a boy, it pleased me to track the old Romans thus far on their way; and how a very curious old man, a Mr. Davis, a builder, I think, but a great picture-collector in his way, and who was under obligations to the old squire's family, and lived in a bright red house on the Welsh side of the Welsh bridge, Shrewsbury, told me all about the finding of it by the ploughs creaking as the share crossed it; and how he was sent for by an old Mr. Offley to sketch it, and then of the interest taken in the matter by those good old men so dear to Shrewsbury, and her subsequent historians, Archdeacon Owen, J. B. Blakeway—and he, perhaps the ablest antiquary of the lot, and my very good, kind old friend, W. G. Rowland, of the Abbey Foregate, whose home was an old curiosity shop, and whose manners were as primitive as his dress.

The advance of the Romans in this direction, together with some antiquarian remarks on the locality, may be picked

up from the following passage in Eyton's 'Antiquities of Shropshire,' where one old friend's name is introduced :

'The Romans,' says Mr. Blakeway, 'are known to have been at least as near Pontesbury as the Lea Cross, and certainly they worked lead mines in the Stiperstones Hills. Pontesford and Pontesbury are in a line between the Lea Cross and the Stiperstones; and if the Romans found it necessary to erect a bridge at Pontesford over the rivulet, which is occasionally a considerable stream, and if the locality was thence denominated *Pontes*, the Saxons, coming after the Romans, might call a road across this rivulet the *Ford*, or way of the Pontes. Similarly, a rude fastness at Pontesbury might be called the *byrig* or *burg* of the *Pontes*.'

This etymology, which Mr. Blakeway leaves to the judgment of his readers, is fortified by other considerations. The Romans have left other marks of occupation in this neighbourhood. Such names as Stoney *Stretton* and Wattlesborough indicate as much, to say nothing of the probability that the lead mines of the Ponsert (or Pontesford) Hill itself were originally a Roman discovery.

'Again, the Romans left England in the fifth century, and we have evidence that in the seventh century Pontesbury was called by a name the last half of which was Saxon, while the first half was so spelt by a native writer as to show that probably it was Latin, but that certainly it was not Saxon. In the year 661' (a passage above referred to) 'Cenwalh, King of the West Saxons, fought with Wulfhere, King of Mercia, at a place which the Saxon chronicler denotes as *Possentes-byrig*. Pontesbury was undoubtedly meant, but the Latin portion of the name was not familiar to the Saxon scribe.'

Finding the Romans at the Lea Cross, one readily calls to mind the 'Itinerary' of Antoninus, in which are set down *Rutunium*, or Rowton, and *Uriconium*, or Wroxeter, to be spoken of in another chapter. The distance from the Lea Cross to the modern smelting houses at Pontesford may be ten miles, and thence to Snailbech some three more. These mines I carefully examined years ago, and here were found Roman picks and other instruments, as well as Roman slag pigs. At this moment I do not recollect where these are

deposited, but good old Bishop Butler used to tell us of them.

Shelve—the spot mentioned to Tredithic by the wise women as the site of a Roman lead-mine—is about eight miles from Bishop's Castle, and usually described as under the Stiperstones—in old Drayton's words:

> Stipperston a hill, though not of such renown
> As many that are set here towards the going down.

Many discoveries have been made here of late years, and R. B. More, Esq., of Linley, is said to have in his possession all sorts of tools and picks, as well as pigs, of the date of Adrian, and moulds. After the times of the Romans we know little or nothing of the working of the lead mines till a comparatively modern date. But in an early forest-roll for Shropshire, which is proved to belong to 1180, or 26 Hen. II., 55*l.* is entered as accruing from the sale of land, the produce of the King's mines at Shelve. This date is very satisfactorily worked out by Mr. Eyton in his 'Antiquities of Shropshire' —a most valuable work.

It has been before remarked as curious that there should be no reference in 'Domesday' to the mines, lead or other, in Shropshire. The demesne land in Derbyshire evidently, at that time, stood in highest repute for minerals. Of this portion of that county—called by the Saxons *Peac-lond*, and still retained in the term Peake—Camden has the following remarks:

'It abounds so in lead that the chemists who have condemned the planets to the mines as if they were guilty of some crime, ridiculously pretend that Saturn, to whom they have assigned power over lead, has been very kind in giving us lead, and angry with the French, to whom he has denied it. But I believe Pliny referred to this county, when he said, "In Britain they find such quantities of lead under the surface of the earth, that a law has been made to stint them to a certain quantity." For in these mountains lead stones, as the miners call them, are daily dug up in great plenty. One of the hills exposed to the west wind by Creach and Wirkesworth (which last has its name from the lead works), at stated

times when the west wind blows, which, by experience, they have found to be the most constant wind, they melt with great quantities of wood, and draw it off by channels, by running in which it is formed into masses called Sows.'

On the passage from Pliny it may be remarked that those who have visited the Stye, at the head of the Borrowdale Pass, on their way to Scawfell or Wastwater, will have had the lead mine, which used to be opened once only in seven years, pointed out to them by the guide. By the way, in the new specimens of black lead (is there any lead in them at all?) exhibited in the International, we see, perhaps, the rival of the celebrated pencils of Seatoller—called in the district *kellow* and *wad*. At Keswick, and in the villages round about, the common name for a lead pencil is a wad pencil.

Pigs, with Roman inscriptions—one with the name of Hadrian, like those of Shelve and Snailbech—have also been found here; and it is added in the Additions to Camden: 'We have evidence that the Wirksworth mines were wrought early in the eighth century by the Saxons, when Eadburga, daughter of Adulf, King of the East Angles, and abbess of Repton, in this county, sent St. Guthlac a leaden coffin and a shroud, in which he was buried; and A.D. 835, Kenwara, another abbess, gave lead here to the amount of 300 shillings to Christ Church at Canterbury. In "Domesday" here were three lead mines, besides others at Bakewell, Ashford, Crick, and Masterford.'

Mr. Phillips informs us that the 'Auld Gang' lead mines in Yorkshire were old in the days of the Saxons; and as for the number of Roman pigs that have been dug up in different parts of the island, it would not be easy to give a catalogue. No less than twenty were found at once on the Cheshire shore, as Camden tells us in another place, dating from the days of Vespasian and Domitian, and from the lettering CEANG on one of them, he was led to locate the Cangi, or the Ceangi, in these parts, who are mentioned by Tacitus. 'Ptolemy places the *Καγκάνων* Promontorium on this coast; nor do I presume to look anywhere but on this coast for the station CONGANIOS, where, on the decline of the Roman

Empire, a company of *scouts* kept guard with their officer under the *Dux Britanniarum*. But I shall leave everyone to form their own opinion on this subject.' Quite in Herodotean style! I may add with reference to the Roman pigs that a dozen inscriptions, more or less, are given by Mr. Wright from different collectors, in his book entitled, 'The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon,' and the numbers might be increased to any extent.

We are reminded of what still goes on in Australia, California, Columbia, and other gold fields, when we look to the old lead-works in Derbyshire. The little wooden cross by which the miners marked off their working ground was called a *stoter* or *stow*, and each of their *meers*, or working spaces, contained twenty-nine yards. Places of great contention must all such spots be, especially if the search be for gold. Everyone who should say with Midas—

> Effice, quidquid
> Corpore contigero, fulvum vertatur in aurum—

will have to repent at leisure, and to wish from his heart that the injurious boon had never been granted to his wishes. Perhaps few fables from the 'Metamorphoses' have a more practical lesson attached to them. Poor Midas!

> Attonitus novitate mali, divesque miserque,
> Effugere optat opes, et, quæ modo voverat, odit.
> Copia nulla famem relevat: sitis arida guttur
> Urit, et inviso meritus torquetur ab auro.

Better, at any time, coal, and iron, and lead, than a glut of gold in a land, for, as Timon of Athens said bitterly, so have we seen it instanced in these our days, as men have bowed down before the image of gold—

> The learned pate
> Ducks to the golden foot.

But to return to the lead mines, of which the wise women told old Tredithic, and of which he made his report to the time-honoured father of the present Oak.

A very curious passage is to be found in the 'Natural History' of Pliny, which deserves to be extracted here. '*Timæus historicus a Britanniâ introrsus sex dierum naviga-*

tione abesse dicit insulam Mictim, in quâ candidum plumbum proveniat. Ad eam Britannos vitilibus (*? vimineis*) *navigiis corio circumsutis navigare.*' What makes this passage curious to one conversant with the lead mines of this district is, that there still exists one called 'The White Grit Lead Mine.' What was the *candidum plumbum* of Pliny is, perhaps, not so clear as some think. The white grit simply points to ore of a finer sort than that which was more generally brought to the smelting-furnace.

Those who visit the lead district must not omit to visit these smelting-furnaces, for, however deleterious the fumes thrown off may be, and however one shrinks from the pale, cadaverous faces of the smelters with pity and sorrow, one may ease the labour of the day by a small *douceur* and some kind words, which will not be thrown away. What can be more beautiful than the white, silvery mass, as it bubbles up in the furnaces, or what more simple than the tapping of the furnace, and the running of the molten ore into pigs?

The damage to the health of the men done by smelting-houses is thus mentioned in the Additions to Camden:

'The ore is run into *pieces* either in smelting houses or cupolas. The latter were introduced near fifty years ago, and are considered as less prejudicial to the health of the workmen than the former; but smelting-houses are still used. The smoke of the lead produces palsies, consumptions, the *byon*, which resembles the quinsy, and a disorder in the bowels called the *belland*; and affects cattle which feed on the grass or heath contaminated by the smoke. It gives a sweetness to the herbage, and makes them eat it greedily; but the proprietors are often forced to pay damages for the cattle which are killed by it.'

In the days of my boyhood this was the case at Pontesford, and, indeed, till the great smelting-chimneys were erected; nor is the evil even yet entirely done away with, though it be nothing like to that occasioned by the fumes of sulphur at Swansea thrown off in the copper smelting, and which have entirely denuded the beautiful woods of St. Helen's one was never tired of looking upon. Formerly, at the Pontesford smelting-houses great quantities of oil were drunk by the

smelters to counteract the evil effects of the arsenic. In examining the works last year (1861) I was told that much oil was still used, but not so much. Years ago many experiments were tried on the smoke as it issued from the chimneys by a well-known practitioner in the neighbourhood. Amongst other things, it was observed that no bird could pass through the volume unscathed, but fell down dead—thus illustrating, once more, the old classical story of Avernus and the cave

> Quam super haud ullæ poterant impune volantes
> Tendere iter pennis : talis sese halitus atris
> Faucibus effundens supera ad convexa ferebat.
> Unde locum Graii dixerunt nomine Aornon.

As far as old Tredithic recollected, the wise women never said anything to him about the iron mines of the district. 'But,' said my Talking Friend, 'my venerable father and myself have full cause to know how plentiful iron has always been of late years. To say nothing of the stab nails which mischievous boys have driven from time immemorial into our trunks—an evil habit from which you and your brothers were not free—iron staples, iron hooks, and iron fastenings for gates have been set so firm in our bodies that we have shuddered at the inhumanity of our supposed best friends; and had we not had hearts of oak we must have died. As it was, our life's blood—which you call *tannin*—oozed out amain!'

And I felt the quiet reproof, and called to mind how, many a time and oft, I had hammered at the Old Oak till I was weary. But what boy ever could resist the spasmodic use of a hammer and nail—those early gifts of most kind friends, never forgotten in after-life?

> Which gifts
> (Saving your mincing), the capacity
> Of your soft cheveril conscience would receive
> If you might please to stretch it.

Good Old Oak, to have forgiven what Gloster calls all these 'plots and inductions dangerous' of very mischievous boys indeed!

Nor was it likely that much could have been said of iron in these parts at an early date. The fact is, that although

the Romans had plenty of iron, and were thoroughly conversant with the use of cold iron, so that their favourite poet said in his Fasti—

> Qui bene pugnârat, Romanam noverat artem :
> Mittere qui poterat tela, disertus erat—

yet it was not in Shropshire that they either found or smelted it. It was from the Forest of Dean, and the Anderida wood of the Wealds of Sussex and Kent, that they drew their chief supply, and some, probably, from Warwickshire and Worcestershire. The Forest of Dean yields plenty of testimony to Roman work, and the masses of scoriæ in Sussex all point the same way. The readers of Drayton's 'Polyolbion' will find in the sixteenth Song the lament of the nymphs of Andredsweld, on the destruction of their forests for the kindling of the iron furnaces :

> When as the anvil's weight, and hammer's dreadful sound,
> Even rent the hollow woods and shook the queachy ground.

The iron rails to St. Paul's were from Lamberhurst, in Kent, and, if I recollect right, they were the gift of that saintly man, Bishop Wilson—a name never mentioned to this day in the isle of his Episcopate but with unbounded respect.

Calling to mind the use this good bishop turned iron to, it is pleasant to read this passage from the 'Remains' of the great Camden : 'One writeth, I know not upon whose credit, that Roger Bacon, commonly called Friar Bacon, knew to make an engine, which, with saltpetre and brimstone, should prove notable for battery ; but he, tendring the safety of mankind, would not discover it.' He might have taken for his motto the lines of Ovid :

> Neque enim bene facta maligne
> Detrectare meum est.

For it is most true what Bishop Andrewes said in his sermon at the Spittle : 'We are ready to corrupt ourselves in every good gift of God : in wisdom, in manhood, in law, in divinity, in learning, in eloquence ; every and each of these serveth as a stirrup to mount us aloft in our own conceits.' But, if wars must not cease because we are not good enough for the

blessings of unbroken peace, may we not hope that the perfection of the instruments to be used may tend to humanise what cannot but be called inhuman—at least, in Christian hands? As a boy, I recollect a passage in good old Mitford's 'History of Greece' on this point, which, some day, I must hunt out again. Since he wrote his History many have been written; neither was he the pedant, self-satisfied workers in the same mines were pleased to call him. Thirlwall took his line, Grote has taken his; but Mitford, notwithstanding his peculiar orthoëpy, holds his own as well as they do.

Not unconnected with the subject before us was a conversation which my Talking Friend reported to me one day about copper.

'"The year was getting on," said my venerable father, "and the eels had got their heads well down the Rea, so that I suppose it must have been as late as October, about which time the eels swim downwards towards the Severn—for otherwise it is only in thunderstorms that they press their heads much downwards—about this time it was that two elderly children of the Cymry, who addressed each the other by the names of Cyfeilioc and Cadwalader, came down the Pontesbury road, such as it was in those days, dressed after their country's fashion, in blue wadmal jackets. They were both afoot, and drove before them two strong horses, each loaded with very heavy panniers. I did not know them," said my father, "but it is clear they had travelled the way before, for they spoke of Pengwerne familiarly and of the country round about, and quietly unloading their beasts, and laying the panniers carefully down on the ground, they took the wearied creatures and washed and watered them, as if they loved them, at the Meole ford on the Rea."

'The curiosity of the ancient oak, my father, was raised, and he was very anxious to know what was in the panniers; and as he was obliged to hear what they said beneath his shade, he felt no uneasiness or impropriety in being a listener, neither did he hear any harm of himself. On the contrary, the Cymry expressed themselves most grateful for the shade they enjoyed. The subject of their conversation turned upon the contents of their panniers. They had an old friend, a

brazier, in Pengwerne, and they were taking him, as a present, in return for which they knew they should receive full compensation, a quantity of *cupfr* nodules, which my father interpreted to be *copper*, which had been collected in *Tîr Mon* —the modern Anglesea—and from a place in Carnarvonshire which he thought they called *Trevriw*. Such, it turned out, were the contents of the panniers, and the mineral appeared to be of all sorts and sizes. Some pieces they showed to each other with great pride—they seemed to be almost in a pure metallic state, and amongst them some beautiful crystals—and it was with a pleasant satisfaction they anticipated the delight their old friend, the brazier on Severn, would take in them. "I vastly took to the simplicity of these wayfarers," my father used to say, and he regretted that he never saw them again. Even I,' continued my Talking Friend, 'have always been pleased with the aboriginal Britons, when they came down this way with their creels loaded with crabs, lobsters, and mussels. But it is many and long a day now since they used to traffic in this way. You, as a boy, may recollect their honest, outlandish appearance, but it is as much as you will be able to do. I should say it is fifty years quite since the Cymry, in their ancient Celtic dress, ceased to travel this way with their creels.'

Just as my Talking Friend had said this there was an audible rustling in his leaves, and by-and-by a vehement shaking of his boughs ; for the winds had come down from Habberley Hole, and presently it blew half a gale. Pleased with what I had heard of Cyfeilioc and Cadwalader, and with that

> Ample interchange of sweet discourse,
> Which so long sundered friends should dwell upon,

as they and their friend the brazier in Pengwerne, I fell asleep. And when I awoke and began to think of what I had heard, I recollected that copper must have been no uncommon metal amongst us, for that copper pigs (as we must call them) had been found in Wales and Cornwall. And to come nearer home, in the Ogo, or Cave at Llanymynech, which I visited as a boy with kind friends and relatives—all

departed now!—the old Romans are thought to have dug out copper ore. Two iron pickaxes found there are deposited in the library of our old school at Shrewsbury. Llanymynech is said to mean the *Village of Miners*, and the Ogo, or Ogof Cave, is but an ancient mining level. The great limestone range of North Wales commences here, and here it is, in these limestone rocks, that the green, dusty ore of copper is found, to which the miners have long given the name of 'copper malm.' Within my recollection, the farmers, and statesmen, and cottagers, in their lands, and under Causey Pike in Cumberland, could not keep fowls because they picked up so much copper in the neighbouring roads, and on the banks of the stream. Any one who sought for them might collect green-stained stones in the beck, as Southey's children used to do. And this reminds me of the words of Camden, at which, if the reader likes, he may smile, though the antiquary was on the right scent: 'The south part of this county is called *Copeland* and *Coupland*, because it rises in pointed mountains, which the Britons called *Copa*, or, as others think, *Copeland*, for *Copper-land*, from its rich veins of copper.' To which may be appended from the Additions, 'The rich copper mines at Newlands are said to have served all England and divers places beyond sea; but the works being destroyed and the miners killed in the civil war, they have never since been worked to any account.'

It may be added that if no great quantity of gold was ever found in Great Britain, yet at all times gold *has* been found and mines worked. In Ireland, there is no doubt but that considerable quantities of gold were found formerly, although many of the curious Irish ornaments, like those equally curious in Scandinavia, may have been made from imported gold of the merchant. Somewhere or other—I think in his 'Annals of Elizabeth'—Camden speaks of the gold produced in these islands, and, as seen in one of the introductory mottoes, Strabo especially notes it. I don't recollect that Cæsar does, but Tacitus follows Strabo: '*Fert Britannia aurum et argentum, et alia metalla.*'

Wishing to learn whether the Old Oak had ever heard of any gold mines in Wales, I asked my Talking Friend if ever

he had heard his father speak upon the subject. His reply was, that 'once, and once only, old Tredithic said that the wise women hinted, not obscurely, that gold was to be found in Wales, and that many of the old people had rings and little twisted chains, which had been wrought by cunning workmen, who lived in the mountains—that these workmen were always spoken of with some reserve. The wise women said openly that they dealt in the black art (whatever that might mean), and that they held secret communication with the spirits of the mines. At all this, old Tredithic used to laugh heartily, remarking shrewdly, that all people in those early days who excelled their fellows in any handicraft were sure to try and keep the secret with themselves. This, he believed, was the sum and substance of the mystery. He had seen many gold ornaments, but he could not affirm that they were made of Welsh gold, though he thought it probable they were.'

I had almost omitted to add that old Tredithic had some curious British pearls. The Welsh on the Conway used to call '*Kregin Diliv*,' or Deluge Shells, the great mussels from which they are extracted, and the old man kept several of them as curiosities. It has been mentioned in an earlier chapter that Evan Gryffyth gave some of these pearls to the beautiful Ella. From time immemorial they have been found in our rivers—in England, in Scotland, and in Ireland. But the remarkable point is the discrepancy between the Venerable Bede's description of them and that of the Roman writers—the one recording their beauty, the latter their comparative dullness. In Bede's words: '*Sunt et musculæ, quibus inclusam margaritam omnis quidem coloris optimam inveniunt, id est, et rubicundi et purpurei et jacinthini et prasini, sed maximè candidi*;' which latter words I mark in italics, as contrary to the description given by Tacitus before alluded to, as well as to that in Pliny and Ammianus Marcellinus. '*In Britanniâ*,' are Pliny's words, '*parvos et decolores nasci certum est: quoniam Divus Julius thoracem, quem Veneri Genetrici in templo ejus dicavit, ex Britannicis margaritis factum voluerit intelligi*;' evidently expressing a doubt. The words of Ammianus Marcellinus are: *Quod genus gemmæ*

etiam in Britannicis secessibus maris gigni legique, licet dignitate dispari, non ignoramus.' It may be added that Suetonius says of Julius Cæsar, '*Britanniam petiisse spe margaritarum, quarum amplitudinem conferentem, interdum suâ manu exegisse pondus.*' From all these passages, taken together, it is quite clear that our island abounded in pearls, whatever their quality.

'Mr. Pennant,' says Gough, in his Additions to Camden, 'distinguishes this shell-fish by the name of *Mya margaritifera*, or pearl mussel, inhabiting great rivers, especially those which water the mountainous parts of Great Britain, and noted for producing quantities of pearl, for which there have been regular fisheries in several of our rivers. Sixteen have been found in one shell. They are a disease of the fish analogous to the stone in the human body. On being squeezed they will eject the pearl, and often cast it spontaneously in the sand of the stream. A notion prevails that Sir Richard Wynne, of Gwedir, chamberlain to Catherine, queen to Charles II., presented her with a pearl taken in the river Conway, which to this day has a place in the regal crown.'

Of the name '*Kregin Diliv*,' or Deluge Shells, I have never yet seen any satisfactory account. Of the dewy conception of the pearl, Pliny gives an account, which is copied by Ammianus Marcellinus, in the chapters above referred to. I rather think the origin of that story is Oriental.

Besides the Conway in Wales, the Irt in Cumberland used to abound with the British pearl, where the poor people gathered and sold them; but it was on the Tay in Scotland that the largest and the fairest were to be found. In Ireland, the pearl fishery on the river Ban, in the county of Down, was the most notorious. Like others it has now fallen into disrepute. It is mentioned in the Additions to Camden that 'The last attempt to revive the trade was about fifty years ago by a Scotch pedlar, who had picked up a few of some value here, but soon gave over the pursuit. Irish pearls were presented by Gilbert, Bishop of Limerick, to Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, about A.D. 1094.'

It was after turning over such matters in my mind, more especially referring to the mines of the district, that I ventured

to ask my Talking Friend if he had ever heard the Old Oak, his father, speak much of the miners as a body. Considering awhile, he replied:

'I think most of my father's knowledge of the miners was picked up from old Tredithic, though, being fond of information, he listened to all that the miners had to say as they passed to and fro from Shelve, and the Stiperstones, Minsterley, and Pontesbury. His own impression was that they were some of the shrewdest people in the country; and his views were altogether confirmed by old Tredithic. This old descendant of the Druids always maintained that a great portion of all mining knowledge was derived from them, and from the Romans; adding, that there was more Roman blood in English veins than people generally supposed. Was it likely, he would say, when the Romans had to leave Britain in haste, that all with whom they had intermarried would leave it too! A great proportion of the trade of the island, especially on the north coast, was in their hands, and such as were so occupied, and had British ties, would not leave the land and follow the broken fortunes of retreating legions. On the contrary, the amalgamation with British blood was confessed and acknowledged; and they remained behind, to mix still further, in course of time, with Anglo-Saxons, Danes, and Normans. This, Tredithic, perhaps, did not live to see fully accomplished, but my old father did, and I have arrived at the conclusion that our nation's great fame and position has been the result of the best blood of all these put together.'

This was all the Old Oak said, and his leaves were hushed in silence.

In concluding this chapter, I may add that I am not one of those who think that works of art were in a very advanced state amongst our Anglo-Saxon forefathers. Most curious workmanship, indeed, proceeded from the monasteries, which had their smiths and carpenters, their millers, their farmers and their fisher-folk, to say nothing of their architects and illuminators. Some, probably, of the most influential thegns had their *meiny* of household servants—like as now in India—who each took his several part in keeping up the household, supplying it with those articles of trade and manufacture

which were in common use and wanted for everyday purposes.

As for the mines—whether in this district, within reach of the Old Oak's locality, or elsewhere—slaves, no doubt, worked them originally, as amongst the Romans ; and it was not till there was a more general manumission of slaves among the Anglo-Saxons that their artificers increased in the cunning of their craft and in excellence. Even till later days they were under a degree of serfdom—as was the case till almost yesterday with some of the chiefest Russian merchants and tradesmen in St. Petersburg—and those who to the world at large appeared to be very rich and independent as any in the land, had yet their *gafol*, or quit-rent, to pay.

All this, we who live in a land of liberty, and in a land which has prospered beyond many, have to learn by the way, and to be thankful for ; and for countless other blessings, such

> As Wisdom to her sons doth aye vouchsafe,
> When, with pure heart and diligent desire,
> They seek the fountain-springs,
> And of the ages past
> Take counsel reverently.

CHAPTER XI.

OUTLAWS AND FORESTRY.

Wish me good speed,
For I am going into a wilderness
Where I shall find nor path, nor friendly clue,
To be my guide.
WEBSTER, *Duchess of Malfi*, i. 193.

There is an immensity of the past during which the forces of nature were employed by the Ruler of nature in preparing a suitable place for the comfortable existence of intelligent men, even as there is an immensity of the future in which we may hope that existence will be prolonged and that intelligence enlarged.—PHILLIPS'S *Geological Hist. of Yorkshire*, ch. vii. p. 168.

Non omnia grandior ætas,
Quæ fugiamus, habet: seris venit usus ab annis.
OVID, *Met.* vi. 28.

THE locality of the Old Oak, my Talking Friend's father, was, it will be recollected, on a runnel, or runlet, close upon the present high road to Montgomery. But, in those early days, of course, there was no road, but a track or a path, like as in the Cape or Australian bush. By degrees, however, something more like a road, or what we might call a lane, was marked off, and our Saxon forefathers contrived to have it kept well defined, if not well minded; for long before the Norman came in they began to take a great interest in bridges particularly, and to some extent, as would be expected, in the ways that led to them. As regards the road in question, they might have taken a hint from an old road which passed not far off, through the upper part of the parish of Hanwood —that is to say, the Stratum Vitellinum, or Watling Street, one of the great Roman roads which intersected Britain.

Whether this was the case or not, the road on the Rea was one of the great lines of traffic, at least for wayfarers, on their way to Pengwerne Powys, or Scrobbesbyrig; and most of

the Cymry who came down from what was, in Norman days, called Trê Baldwyn or Valdwyn—and afterwards more commonly Montgomery, from Roger Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury, who built the castle on the rock—came by way of Chirbury, Middleton, Shelve, and the Stiperstones, deviating, as it suited their purpose, by Worthen, and then on to Pontesbury through Minsterley, occasionally making for Habberley and the old wooded district of the oaks, and then making a turn by Phaley, Sibberscott, and the Lea Cross, where, as we saw in the foregoing chapter, the old Romans had left their marks behind them, and where the superintendent of the lead mines may possibly have had his place of residence, his bath, and his tesselated floor.

'If I recollect right,' said my Talking Friend one day, 'he that gave the name, or left the name for others to give, to what we now call Montgomery, was one Baldwyn de Bollars, to whom Henry I. granted it in marriage with Sibil de Faleire, his niece. Before that time that portion of the Principality was, I think, called *Gwlad Powys*, or *Powysland*, and North Wales generally *Gwynedd*, just as under one name North Wales was afterwards called *Dinevor*. No mean man was he who, in the northern portion of the Cymry, was permitted to wear the Talaith, or Diadem of Gold! What wayfarer in the ancient days when my aged father was an oakling, ever ceased to speak of Rhodri the Great's three sons, by the name of *Y tri Tywysog Taleithiog*, or the three crowned princes? Very much attached were the Cymry to their own speech. Who, born on the other side the *Mynydd Digol*, or the Long Mountain, ever called the Severn by any other name than *Yr Haf Rhen*, or, in speaking of its junction with the *Vyrnyw*, ever used any other term than *Y Cymmerau*, or the conflux? Even when you were a boy, and had been fishing in North Wales, I recollect your saying that a Taffy could not tell you where *Bala* Lake was, but at once answered your question when you called it *Llyn Tegid*.'

And the good memory of the Old Oak called to my mind days long past; and I recollected, too, how I had wound my way back, after a month's fishing tour in Wales, by the old town of Montgomery.

'A very rough sort of people,' said my Talking Friend, on another occasion, 'used to come down this way sometimes from Trê Baldwyn, as marauders still continued to call it in my time-honoured father's time. As for the old Saxons of these parts, they treated them with the utmost disrespect. One, Eddert Trusbut, there was, of whom he often used to tell, who periodically appeared with Welsh ponies for the market at which he was never called anything else but Pengwerne Powys. The fellow, he said, had very small notions of honesty, and would turn his ponies into anybody's inclosures. Upon one occasion there was a hue and cry after him, and he had to retreat in haste. But within a few years he appeared again, and was as unabashed and insolent as ever. My father never could abide him.'

And I called to mind how Camden spoke of the Ordovices —of whose land Montgomeryshire was a part—as of a robust and powerful people, holding close to their mountains, and deriving their rugged temper from their soil. Indeed, in the days of the Romans, they were not reduced till the firm hand of Agricola grappled with them ; and, in our own days, it was not till the time of Edward I. that they submitted—if it might be called submission—to English rule. A very good illustration of this turbulent district may be picked up from a comparatively recent work, 'The Life of Edward Lord Herbert of Cherbury, written by Himself,' for he says, 'My grandfather was noted to be a great enemy to the outlaws and thieves of his time, who robbed in great numbers in the mountains of Montgomeryshire, for the suppressing of whom he went often, both day and night, to the places where they were ; concerning which, though many particulars have been told me, I shall mention one only. Some outlaws being lodged in an alehouse upon the hills of Llandinam, my grandfather and a few servants coming to apprehend them, the principal outlaw shot an arrow against my grandfather, which stuck in the pommel of his saddle ; whereupon my grandfather coming up to him with his sword in his hand, and taking him prisoner, he showed him the said arrow, bidding him look what he had done ; whereof the outlaw was no further sensible than to say, he was sorry that he left his better bow at home,

which he conceived would have carried his shot to his body. But the outlaw being brought to justice, suffered for it.' Something, by the way, of this same roughness seems to have extended to Chirbury Priory, not far off, for the Prior and the Brethren took no notice of Bishop Swinfield's complaint made against them in 1285; and in the very next year he was obliged to write again (June 17, 1286), censuring them severely, and telling them how he had heard that they were '*tam vani, litigiosi, garruli, vagi, et profugi super terram, quod nec Deo nec Priori, neglectâ regularis observantiâ disciplinæ, obediunt ut debent.*' A very poor and sorry account indeed!

Eddert Trusbut's insolence must have been particularly unpalatable to the Saxons on the Rea, since we find from 'Domesday Book' that the territory about Montgomery was claimed, if not colonised, by that ancient people. 'As regards the civil and progressive history of the district, we may observe,' says Mr. Eyton, 'that the names of more than half the villages given indicate a Saxon occupation and colonisation, anterior to the reign of Edward the Confessor. That monarch's struggle with Wales is known to have been inglorious till the famous campaign of Harold, son of Godwin. We need not marvel, then, that the *tane* and the *cote*, and the *beric* and the *hale*, are pronounced by 'Domesday' to have been indiscriminately *waste* in the Confessor's day, and reduced to the condition of a hunting-ground for his thanes.' To which he presently adds that, great as was William, Duke of Normandy, and great as was his sagacity in the choice of his lieutenants, 'After the era of Domesday, till the conquest of Wales, there was neither king, nor viceroy, nor baron, who might count on rents and venison westward of Montgomery.' All this affords us a sample of the sort of people who were passing on towards Chirbury, that vast parish which, in former days, probably included the whole of the Domesday Hundred of Witentreu. Worthen would be sure to attract the attention of such marauders as Eddert Trusbut, from the wonderful quantity of swine fed there—in the words of 'Domesday,' '*cc porcis incrassandis sufficit.*'

'My father was very far advanced in years,' said my Talking Friend one day, 'when a wonderful fair took place

at Montgomery. It continued four days, and notice of it was given by the King (Henry III., May 3, 1225) to North and South Wales, and to divers of the English counties—Shropshire being one. The number of people, he said, that went to the fair, and returned from it, by way of the Rea, was surprising, thinly as our districts were peopled in those days. What were the commodities they dealt in I never recollect his mentioning, but soon after many wayfarers appeared with packs, like old Joss the Weaver used to carry, and the women, in particular, had dealings with them. I suppose they were something of the same cut and cloth as our more modern pedlars. As the old proverb says, it is likely "there went but a pair of shears between them." The only point which my time-honoured father used to advert to in particular was the Welsh ponies which were always seen up and down the country after fairs of this sort. In later days, I myself very well recollect the use made of them in bringing down the flannels from Welshpool, Newtown, and other parts, for the dealers in Shrewsbury, as we at length contrived to call the old town in a more softened form. Not that the Anglo-Saxon speech was so harsh as it seems to be; it is only so to unfamiliar ears. Beneath my shade, many a time and oft, I have heard voices as soft as the softest music, or as the rippling of the Rea over the gravels on a summer's day, when its waters were clear as crystal, and its speckled trout glistened like the light. I must not omit to add that my aged father said that the Welsh ponies above alluded to were a wonderful breed, and that in early times of Norman dominion, the horses generally in Wales were improved by an intermixture of Spanish stock.'

Even within my days the numbers of Welsh ponies which were to be picked up at their fairs were very great, and some of them, when brought home from the mountains and groomed for a year or so, turned out pretty creatures. One we had, who boasted in the name of DI—whatever that meant—was quite a little barb in his way, and sure-footed as a Peruvian mule. The leaps that he would take, with a little boy on his back, after the harriers, were perfectly surprising. In his way, he was quite equal to a good-natured neighbouring

squire's horse, Banquo, and always attracted his attention in the field. I must not forget to add that Dyer, in his poem on the 'Fleece,' alludes to their bringing down the Welsh flannel to the good old town of Shrewsbury. It cannot be said that there is much poetry in the lines, but they are literally true, and he must, I think, have seen them on their way. Dyer himself was a Welshman, and was born at Aberglaswy, in Carmarthenshire.

> The northern Cambrians, an industrious tribe,
> Carry their labours on pygmean steeds,
> Of size exceeding not Leicestrian sheep,
> Yet strong and sprightly ; over hill and dale
> They travel unfatigued, and lay their bales
> In Salop's streets, beneath whose lofty walls
> Pearly Sabrina waits them with her barks,
> And speeds the swelling sheet.

I pick out from the historians of Shrewsbury that Robert de Belesme, the third Norman earl, mentioned in the 'Saxon Chronicle' under A.D. 1102, as holding 'what his father Roger had previously held, and a great territory thereto, both on this side of the sea and beyond,' was the person who improved the breed of Welsh horses.' Giraldus tells us that he improved the breed of horses in Powis, by introducing sires out of Spain ; 'whence,' says that writer, 'the horses of this country are eminent for their make and speed.' To which they add in a note, 'So we translate *membrosa sua majestate*, because the Welsh horses do not seem ever to have been remarkable for their size, which the words of Giraldus would otherwise seem to import. The late Arthur Blayney, Esq., of Gregynog, a liberal patron of every useful institution in his native county of Montgomery, and the genuine descendant of its ancient sovereigns, the kings of Old Powis, took great pains to collect and maintain a fine breed of strong and active, but not tall, horses ; which he considered as the true posterity of the steed of Robert de Belesme.'

It is very well known that a breed of wild horses existed throughout the land in very early days, and a correspondent of the historian above referred to remembered 'large herds on the mountainous tracts between Llanfair and Machynlleth

with their manes sweeping the ground.' Poins, they aptly tell us, 'rode the *wild mare* with the boys;' and my impression is that the old race of Welsh ponies, and the modern breed, are all the descendants of the sires of Spain and the native wild mares. Century after century the wild ponies grew less and less, as might be expected from their scanty food and hard lines on the mountains of the Cymry.

'But,' continued my Talking Friend, 'although my aged father generally considered the company which came eastward from these fairs to be rough, yet every now and then company of a better caste wound their way beneath his shade. One, Alan, he used to mention particularly, who was a great friend of the old Priest at Hanwood, and used to visit him previously to the annual assembly at the Moat-hall, not far off. If I recollect right he was an Augustine Friar of Snead, from whence the body migrated to Chirbury, where, from a great intermixture of foreigners, much turbulence is said to have arisen; neither did they altogether maintain a good report. But to Alan no blot ever attached, and he was the humblest and most patient of men. It was delightful, my aged father would say, to watch Alan and the old Priest of Hanwood together. Many a time had he seen them on the Rea's banks in deep contemplation, and he always noted that after his return the good old Priest contrived to hit upon some better means of helping the poor around him. No doubt, he would add, he longed for Alan's coming, and on his departure he was both missed and wanted. The name of the old Priest of Hanwood in those days, I think, was Gregory; and if we had many there who merely ate, and drank, and slept away their lives, he did nothing of the kind, but was wide awake to the sacredness of his calling. His great desire was to root out all ungodliness, and to practise what he preached. "It was a pleasant day to me whenever they sat down beneath my shade, and I delighted to hear them speak of ways and means how to rid the land of superstitious and unholy rites, and what old Tredithic called the remnants of Druidism, which lurked in many a dark habitation, not of the mountains only, but of what we used to call Powisa, or the Low Country, too." Within my recollection,' added my Talking

Friend, 'the "Chirbury Boys," as they were called, were a very rough set, as I shall have to mention in its proper place, and their wild conduct would have very much distressed the good man, Alan.

'The Forest of the Stiperstones, as my venerable father sometimes called what has been called at different times Stenufrestanes, Steyfrestanes, Tenfrestanes, and I know not what else, was, in his earlier days, regarded with a sort of superstition. The miners, as they passed on their way backwards and forwards, used to tell of its dark recesses, and of the spirits of the mines and of the storm, and one, old Sennard, or Siward—he bore the same name as one of the greatest landholders of Shropshire in old times—never ceased to tell marvellous stories of the wild beasts which tenanted its slopes. Moreover, he used to add mysteriously that there was a well-known descent in this district to the shades below, and that the evil one, called by the monks of Snead, Sire Satanas, had been often seen prowling about in the shape of a huge goat. The Priest of Hanwood used to smile when he heard the Old Oak, my father, repeat the conversations of old Siward; but he added that no doubt this gave origin to the name of the Devil's Chair, still applied to one of the outjutting crags, or *steypas*, on which you and your brothers have sat more than once in your boyhood.'

And, as I began to think over this remarkable district of the Stiperstones Forest—'a chase and jurisdiction annexed from time immemorial to the Barony of Caus'—the recollections of the boy, which turned on sport, and pleasure, and discovery, settled down into the meditations of the man, and I called to mind how one of the greatest geologists of the day, no less a person than Sir R. I. Murchison, thus spoke of the district in one of his greatest works:

'Discovering in that year—1831—a considerable tract in Hereford, Radnor, and Shropshire, wherein large masses of grey-coloured strata rose out from beneath the old red sandstone, and contained fossils differing from any which were known in the superior deposits, I then began to classify these rocks. I assigned to them (1835) the name of "Silurian," deriving it from the portion of England and Wales in which

the successive formations are clearly displayed, and wherein an ancient British people, the Silures, under their king Caradoc (Caractacus), had opposed a long and valorous resistance to the Romans.'

So much for the name. In an after-page he speaks of—

'The fossiliferous strata, which, resting in conformable apposition upon the upper ledges of the Longmynd, have, from the period of my earliest researches, been classed as Silurian. The lowest of these bands is well displayed in the ridge called the Stiperstones, than which there are few more striking features in the physical geography of the British Isles. Trending in a broken mural line from north-north-east to south-south-west, these stony masses appear to the artist like insulated Cyclopean ruins, jutting out upon a lofty moorland ridge, at heights varying from 1,500 to 1,600 feet above the sea. On reaching the summit of this barren height, the traveller sees below him, to the west, a rapid slope, and beyond it a picturesque hilly tract, the strata of which are laden with lower Silurian fossils, and diversified by a variety of rocks of igneous origin. In short, he has then within his view the original type of formations which, raised to greater altitudes, and affected by slaty cleavage, occupy huge mountainous districts in Wales. The geologist who becomes familiar with the protruding bosses of the Stiperstones, perceives that they are outstanding fragments of a thick band of siliceous sandstones. Though in parts varied, altered, fractured, and occasionally passing into crystallised quartz rock, they yet form an integral portion of the overlying schistose formation, whilst fragments of the shells called lingulæ occur in them.'

Certain it is that no one with an eye to the picturesque can visit the Stiperstones without being struck with the beauty of the spot; and if he be versed in the history of days gone by, as he looks westward towards the Long Mountain, or eastward towards the Longmynd or Wenlock Edge, what grand recollections of the stand made against the Romans by Caractacus will rise before him! Or let him travel but a few miles south-west, and he will come upon the very Caer Caradoc which perpetuates his name between Knighton and

Clun—that ancient place where Picot de Say, in the time of Domesday, was lord, one of Earl Roger's chief vassals in Shropshire, and where, in 1614, Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, founded that hospital dedicated to the Holy Trinity, consisting of twelve poor brethren and a warden, the statutes of which declare, 'We do ordain and establish that in the said hospital there shall be, for ever, one warden and twelve poor men, who shall wholly give themselves to the service of God, and to pray for the peace, tranquillity, and concord of all Christendom.' 'And so,' says the pleasant author of 'All Round the Wrekin'—'and so, twice a day, the poor men, now sixteen in number, meet together in the chapel, wearing on Sundays an ample blue gown, figured with the badge of a white lion on the sleeve.'

But we have wandered from Caer Caradoc and Caractacus, and must return to say that two other Caradocs claim to be the true ones, the one near Church Stretton, the other near Sellack, in Herefordshire. Which is the true one the antiquaries must decide, but probably each one will hold to its own. Sir R. I. Murchison, as Mr. Hartshorne has stated, holds to the Caer Caradoc of this district; and if the battle was 'fought on the north bank of the Teme, as has hitherto been reputed, it may have commenced at Holloway Rocks, two miles below Knighton, in Radnorshire, from which place the Britons were ultimately driven to Caer Caradoc, where their leader was captured.' It may be seen, however, in an after page, that this is not Mr. Hartshorne's own view.

The Old Oak, it is evident, had not concerned himself with such matters, neither had his venerable father. They were much before his days; and all he reported to his son, my Talking Friend, was the struggle which the Cymry always represented themselves to have made *pro aris et focis*—and, as it has been remarked before, the original old oak was very fond of the Welsh. Was not his greatly beloved Tredithic a Welshman of the first water?

We, in these days, who have millions of mouths to feed, are delighted as we see the woods and forests brought under culture; though, possibly, ever and anon, we may grumble a bit when we find our favourite old haunts on the Downs

scratched by the plough. We yield, however, to necessity. But this was not the view the Old Oak took of the forests of the land and of the county.

'There was nothing,' said my Talking Friend, 'in which my venerable father took more delight than in hearing the wanderers speak of the grand forests which covered the land. Heart of oak himself, he gloried in hearts of oak. And he would ask, "Where—the great forest of Wyre excepted, which gave name to Worcestershire—where could one see such forests as our own Morf, or Shirlot, the Clee, the Stiperstones, or the Long Forest?" All these put together, or rather the whole forest-land anywhere, old Tredithic called by the name of *Coed*, which our Saxon forefathers softened into Quat, as the old Hermit of Bridgnorth, the friend of the Priest of Hanwood, once remarked in my hearing. "Glad am I," I have heard my aged father say, over and over again, "that my branches wave in sight of the Stiperstones. The world may call it an out-of-the-way place, but I have known kings to hunt there, since Saxon Harold's time, who is reported to have built those piles as memorials of his victories over the Welsh; and hunt where kings might, they never had better hunting-grounds than these.'

Such was the report my Talking Friend gave of the Shropshire forests; and for those who are interested in such matters, the account following, from our excellent antiquary and historian, Mr. Eyton, is a valuable one:

'Where now the counties of Shropshire, Staffordshire, and Worcestershire converge, there was once a vast region of forest, not confined to one bank of a succession of lakes and marshes, which we now know as the valley of the Severn, but stretching away for miles eastward and westward. The Severn itself was in one place a land-locked and sluggish stream; in another, a series of rivulets struggling on, with no concentrated force, amid the various impediments which uncontrolled nature had crowded on its course. Its fits of wintry and swollen fury, like human passions, reacted upon themselves; for the giant oak, which to-day was torn from its bank and plunged in the torrent, lay on the morrow athwart the subsiding stream, an additional element of its future

bondage. The region, whose chief features I thus imagine, seems to have been known to the Britons as *Coed*, or forest—the forest, that is, *par excellence* of this part of England. When we read of the forests of Morf, Kinver, and Wyre, we get notions of extent which must be added one to the other before we can realise any idea of the more ancient *Coed*; for the *Coed* was the parent of the other three, and they, perhaps, not its only constituents.'

What the venerable Oak said of the hunting-grounds of former days is strictly true. His information came from some old friends of his at Habberley and Minsterley, who, on their way to Scrobbesbury, often talked of the wonders of the chase in those parts. The able authority above quoted must again be referred to. 'In Habberley is a place still called Marstley; and I infer, from a curious passage in "Domesday," that the Saxon king-lords of Minsterley had a park at Marstley. It is recorded among the ancient customs of Shrewsbury that when the King visited the town, the sheriff used to send thirty-six footmen as his body-guard (*ad stabilitionem*) for so long as he remained there. But for the Park at Marstley (the Sheriff) used customarily to find thirty-six men for eight days; that is, I presume, the Sheriff provided the King's body-guard when he went to hunt at Marstley and in the adjacent Royal Forest of the Stiperstones.' Within modern days the woods of this district have been notorious for game of all sorts; and though it was a roughish district, the foxhounds never missed finding their fox. The killing of it was a different matter, for an old sly dog or vixen always took to the rocks.

One day my Talking Friend informed me that his time-honoured father used to speak of Minsterley as of a place of much more consequence than it is at present, or, indeed, than the rail is ever likely to make it. Anyone who visits the spot now will confess it to be a very dreary one and desolate, though he cannot say—

> It was a place of dissolate darkeness.

In the time of 'Domesday' it was no mean place, held by the Earl, as King Edward held it in Saxon times, constituting,

with its two leagues of wood, no despicable portion of the hunting-ground before adverted to. Little, comparatively, of that wood remains now. Speaking of its former presumed consideration, Mr. Eyton remarks, in a portion of the passage above adverted to, 'It is not from "Domesday" alone, nor from one passage only of "Domesday," that I infer Minsterley to have been a much more important place in Saxon times than it has been since. The very name of Minsterley indicates that it was the site of one of those Saxon and collegiate churches which I have so often mentioned as the centres of parishes whose extent we can hardly overrate. Minsterley, I take it, was the mother church of at least Westbury and Habberley; but the collegiate church has from time immemorial—that is, from before Domesday—been at Westbury, and Minsterley has been the chapel. Again, Minsterley, as a manor, probably included Habberley, both in Saxon times and at Domesday.'

Thus was the Old Oak's opinion consentient with that of modern research, though that, too, runs in the groove of guess-work and tradition.

With reference to these districts, my Talking Friend used to repeat a story of his father's which, from the two names combined, shows that it must have occurred since the coming in of the Norman; when, however, he did not know.

'One, Gilbert Eftson,' said the elder oak, 'was on his way from Church Pulverbatch, where business had called him, to Wallebourne. There he fell in with an old friend from Wrentnall, who took him to an out-of-the-way place called Hach, or, at different times, and within my recollection, Akes, Olkas, Hokas, or "The Oaks." Gilbert wanted to get down to Longden, and there his friend intended to guide him, but, unluckily, they made a wrong turn, and lost themselves in a place called Hell Gutter, a wild, dark glen, with a *soak* trickling through it, and in winter never without the woodcock. In those days, however, it was the haunt of the badger, the wild boar, and the wolf. Here it was that night came upon them, and here, too, it was that the two men had that fierce encounter with a grim, gaunt wolf, which Gilbert so often related to his fellow-travellers beneath the old oak's shade. If he had been alone, he said, he must have been

killed, for the wolf caught hold of him on the back part of the thigh, tore such clothes as he had to strips, and severely lacerated the flesh. Fortunately his companion had a huge oaken staff in his hand, and with this he felled the monster to the ground; but, hard-bitten and wiry, he was soon upon his legs again, and made a rush at his friend, and grabbed his smock-frock, or hosen, I forget which, and so hung on. "As good luck would have it, I had my broomhook tied round my middle, and with it I fetched him such a clout on the head as broke in his skull, and there was an end of him." Old Gilbert Eftson retained two of the paws to his dying day, and, I think,' said the time-honoured tree, 'I can even now hear him tell how, in the morning—for they spent the rest of that summer's night in an adjoining tree for safety—he doffed his *mittenas* and deftly took them off at the first joint with his faithful *kwitel*, or clasp knife, which, like his broomhook, was his inseparable companion. "But for these," he would add, "I should never have reached Longden the next day, and very glad were we both when the early summer's dawn came upon us. I shall never forget Hell Gutter as long as I live!"'

In looking into the history of the oaks, the antiquary will find that there was a tenure there for which the quit-rent was 'a glove' (one of old Gilbert Eftson's *mittenas* or mittens?), 'and for which a *sore* sparrow-hawk is said to be paid.' 'Hell Gutter' still retains its name, and in my boyhood it was never, in the winter, without its woodcocks. They were sure to come with the November moon, and 'THE LAST OF THE OLD SQUIRES' was as sure to bag them.

Oddly enough, those deep pits close to Darlington, in Durham, through which Bishop Tunstall passed a goose, are called *Hell Kettles*; and, says Camden, speaking of that portion of Yorkshire called Richmond Shire, 'On the side of the country next to Lancashire is such a dreary waste and horrid silent wilderness among the mountains, that certain little rivulets that creep here are called by the neighbourhood *Hell Becks*, q.d. rivers or streams of hell, and especially that at the head of the *Ure*, which runs under a bridge of a single rock in so deep a channel as to strike beholders with horror.'

Camden only copies Leland, who speaks of 'a beck cawlled *Hell Gitte*, because it runneth in such a deadly place.'

Upon one occasion, when there had been a great importation of ale from Shrewsbury for the wake at Pontesbury, my Talking Friend told me of an old man—Hugh of Hinton by name—of whom his father used to tell many odd stories. Taking his name from a homestead on the Rea, near the old Roman haunt of the Lea Cross, he appears constantly to have been on the tramp, and generally alone. His beat, it seems, was from Minsterley to Shrewsbury, and if anyone would thrust himself into his company he generally contrived to get rid of him at one turning or another. Strange enough, although he was the best of company at what we now call the Tap, he could not bear company on the road. By occupation he was a carpenter, or what we should in the present day call a country builder on a small scale; but, having some private means, and being a person of very moderate habits, he seemed to have left most of the work to his man Will—a clever workman, but one who, like his master, must sometimes be on the tramp. '"When hard weather set in," said the Old Oak, my father, "I very well recollected that he would go all the way to Marton Pool to kill the wild geese," and though they are said nowadays to smell powder, he contrived to snare them, whether by springes or in a decoy I am not able to say. The difference between Hugh of Hinton and his man Will was this. Will rarely drank at all, but was always ready for his meals, which were not always ready for him; for in those days food was scarce, and every day had not its *undorst*, or dinner-time. Hugh, on the other hand, if on his way from Minsterley, was always ready to halt at Pontesbury, and to try the tap there, for there, he said, was to be found the best Cwr in the country. The Saxons had long used the Danish name of *Ocl*, or "Ale," as well as the Norman term "Beer," but old Hugh, probably with Welsh blood in his veins, had his humour, and he would always call malt liquor *Cwr*, or *Cwr-dha*. Mead was to be had in those days, but Hugh despised it as feeble and mawkish, and the drink made of crabs, and apples, and pears —which you now call cider—he spoke of in a very undignified

way; using, indeed, the plainest Anglo-Saxon a man might use, and dubbing it as *rot-gut, kidney-raking stuff*! The Priest of Pontesbury, whom he claimed as his very good friend, never, he said, drank mead or cider—and no man knew what was fitter to drink than he did. He added, that he was a very learned and a very good man, and he had informed him that the Roman overseer of the lead works, who had his *insulated* house and his baths at the place we now call the Lea Cross, himself usually drank *Cerevisia*, or *Cervisia*—not a Roman name, but Celtic, and derived from *Cwrw*. It was queer in old Hugh to recollect all this, but so he did, and to his dying day never altered his drink or its nomenclature. Hugh, my venerable father would add, though fond of his *Cwr*, was never known to be in liquor. He had an odd saying, "One pint and away," and he generally stuck to the sober sense of his ancient saw.'

Suddenly I stopped my Talking Friend in his speech, for I bethought me at once how different ages, in the same locality, will not unfrequently produce the same sort of men, especially if there be a deal of humour amongst the people, for what is here said of Hugh de Hinton applies pretty much to old John Diggory, of the Lea Cross sometime, but now gathered to his fathers. I had known him from childhood upwards—the yew-root stands for the water-glass and caraffe in West Tarring Church vestry were of his turning—and I paid him an annual visit whenever, as the year came round, I took my journey from Sussex into Shropshire, and sat beneath the ancient tree. Only lately I copied the underwritten from a tombstone in the churchyard of Pontesbury—that very Pontesbury of the 'Saxon Chronicle,' and the favourite haunt of Hugh:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF JOHN DIGGORY,
LATE OF THE LEA CROSS,
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE, MARCH 22ND, 1859,
AGED 98 YEARS.

Peace and good-will to men, those gifts divine,
Largessed on earth by Christ, good friend, were thine:
You taught by pattern rich and poor alike,
'Fight for the peace,—be never first to strike!'
God's noblest work we hail thee, now you 're gone,—
'An honest man!' for you were honest JOHN!

'There must have been great simplicity,' said my Talking Friend, on another occasion, 'in Hugh of Hinton's character, for my aged father always heard him express his great obligations to the Priests of Pontesbury and Hanwood for kindly hints and advice. There was another ancient priest to whom also he seems to have been greatly attached—I must correct myself here, for my father always called him Parson—Sir Roger, Parson of Habberley. Oftentimes, Hugh said, he diverged from his direct way on purpose to see him. He lived in the humblest way possible, gave to the wayfarers what he had—mead or ale—and would bid them "God speed!" as an apostle might. Such was the force of character and the innate beauty of goodness and holiness, that this out-of-the-way parson was as much beloved by the lords of the land as by the poor. The great Barons of Caus showed him honour, and in some way or another, of which my father did not recollect to have heard Hugh mention the particulars, John de Arundel, a former lord of Habberley, had made him a grant of land, and ceded to him a messuage and a tenement, which my father recollected his son William holding after him.'

In reverting to the mention of Hugh of Hinton's name, I may add that my Talking Friend said 'he thought Pontesbury was one of his most favourite spots, though the Priest of Habberley was the friend he loved the dearest. In those days, indeed, Pontesbury was a considerable place, though the population, compared with what it is now, was small. It lay, as we have seen, in a direct line with the Stiperstones, where the Romans worked the lead mines as well as at Ponsert Hill, and, odd as it may seem to you now,' continued my pleasant friend and interlocutor, 'almost every house had its private mark, as had all the implements of the household and of the miners. Even nowadays you have, every now and then, initials, or arms, or dates, set up conspicuously on a fronting-stone of a house; but in those days the mark was a symbol, and many a lost article was recovered by means of it. My father used to say that in his recollection all sheep, and goats, and ponies, had their marks burnt into the skin; and you may call to mind that the remnant of these marks continued in your boyhood. Was not Di, the best of Welsh

ponies, marked with an S? Farther to the north my father had heard that every shepherd had his private mark, and that those marks, in the different districts, were carved on rune-sticks, which served for what you now call calendars and almanacs.'

The Old Oak's recollections of Pontesbury went far back no doubt, and he most likely confounded different dates and periods. It was certainly a place of some mark in the time of Domesday, with its mill of note, and its pasturage—or, as we now speak, pannage—for forty swine. When Domesday was compiled, it was held of the Conqueror's Earl by Roger Fitz Corbet—a name familiar to all friends round the Wrekin till the present day—and, under him, old Ernui, or Ernuin the Saxon, was not ejected from his ancient holding, he too being a person of note and property in the Confessor's days. But I will use the words of one of our best antiquaries again, to whom I am so much indebted, on the subject of Ernui and 'Domesday Book:' 'The Saxon Ernui, or Ernuin, had been a man of considerable property in the Confessor's days. Besides two small tenures in *Conodovre Hundred*, he had held four manors in Ruesset Hundred, viz. Westbury, Pontesbury, Fairley, and part of Onslow. The first he had lost before "Domesday," the three others he still held under Roger and Robert Fitz Corbet. Eventually he was dispossessed of all.' So much for the old Saxon whose name has hardly yet passed away. The next extract refers to the great value of 'Domesday Book':

'In reviewing the records of the two centuries which followed "Domesday," a superficial observation will show us the name of one of Robert, not Roger, Corbet's descendants to have been generally associated with Pontesbury. A deeper search, however, proved that Roger Corbet's heirs still retained the *Seigneury*, and that the Fitz Herberts, though they held elsewhere *in capite* as co-heirs of Robert Corbet, were, at Pontesbury, only feoffees of the Barons of Caus. Thus it is that we are recurrently warned not lightly to question the accuracy of "Domesday"—the greatest territorial record which royal wisdom ever planned, official zeal ever executed, or clerkly skill ever engrossed.'

But, to return to Pontesbury. If it was considerable for size and repute in early days, it must be confessed it was a wild spot; not one of those spots of which it might be said that, for its beauty, it

Tempted the weary to forgetfulness;

it might have been so in Hugh of Hinton's days, but in the times before him every man had to look well to his paths, for the woods and the adjoining mountains contained many a marauder. And so it remained for a long time after the Norman came in—vastly independent, and, as we say nowadays, always ready for a row. Edric, for example, Provost of Pontesbury, at the October Assize in 1203, is amerced half a merk for opposing the Sheriff. Again, in 1221, we find that Henry, father of David Fitz Henry of Wudehus (i.e. Woodhouse), had been outlawed for homicide *in Curiâ Comitatus*, and afterwards beheaded. And in later days, I might say almost in modern days, an irritable Pontesburian said to his fellow, under provocation, that 'he had nothing to boast of but his money, and that the better part of his kindred had been either hanged or drowned.'

Had it not, then, its church and priest to lead the people on to civilisation? No doubt from the earliest times, and, as has been seen before in these pages, and will be often seen again, its priests came frequently under the cognisance of the Old Oak—the Priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury being usually friends as well as neighbours. It is remarkable, however, that its church is not mentioned in 'Domesday'—a point with reference to which Mr. Eyton may again be cited with profit under the head of 'Collegiate Church of Saint George at Pontesbury':

'Pontesbury gave name to the Deanery in which it is situated, and that is a presumption, at least, in favour of the antiquity of the church. Something is usually ascertainable about the foundation of every collegiate church which has risen up since the Conquest. Collegiate churches not thus remembered are unquestionably Saxon, and Pontesbury is of the number. The mention of churches in "Domesday" is incidental, depending very much on the land held in demesne by the incumbent

of such church. "Domesday" says nothing about the church of Pontesbury, but I strongly suspect that that part of the manor (1½ hide) which was free from geld was Church land; was, in fact, the privileged domain of the national Saint.'

With reference to the private marks which have been referred to—particularly as relating to the lead marks—there is a passage in Horace Marryat's 'One Year in Sweden' which may serve as an illustration: 'In Götland exists a sort of peasant's heraldry, called Bo-mårken, or house marks. You see them above the doorways of most small gårds. Each family has had its own from the earliest times, stamping with it carts, farming implements, boats, fishing nets, and all articles of furniture. If by chance an oar is found, it is first recognised by the Bo-mårk of the parish, then by that of the gård.'

Suddenly my meditations were cut short by a great rustling in the branches of my Talking Friend, and he presently addressed me, saying, 'Unless the pinchings of my old knotty bark deceive me, and the rattling of the Scotch pines in the Lower Garden, and the murmurs of the Great Pool and the Arscott coppices, it will not be long before a storm bursts; so you had better look out and make the best of your way to Hanwood, or you will certainly be drenched to the skin.'

Well aware of my good Friend's practical knowledge, I took the hint and departed. Indeed, I myself had heard the noise of the waters borne over the weir—always heard before a storm—for some time before; but other thoughts made me neglect the warning, and, but for his kindly and well-timed hint, I should have been like a drowned rat long before I reached the Rectory; for just as I got under shelter of the church wall and the yew trees down it came *à verse*, and not

> Like big swoln clouds drove by a doubtful wind,
> Uncertain where to fall.

Besides the noise of the old weir—so musical, so melancholy at times—I might have observed, too, how the sun had *scalded* all the early morning.

> Before a sudden shower
> The sun shines hottest, and hath greatest power.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WILD STATE OF THE COUNTRY ABOUT THE OLD OAK'S LOCALITY—AND OF ENGLAND AND WALES IN GENERAL IN EARLY DAYS.

Out of the ground uprose,
As from his lair, the wild beast, where he wones
In forest wild, in thicket, brake, or den.
Par. Lost, vii. 456.

Διαφέρουσι δὲ καὶ ταῖς τοιαῖσδε διαφοραῖς κατὰ τὸ ἦθος κ. τ. λ. 'Animals also exhibit many differences of disposition. Some are gentle, peaceful, and not violent, as the ox; some are violent, passionate, and intractable, as the wild boar; some are prudent and fearful, as the stag and the hare; others, as the lion, are liberal, noble, and generous; others are brave, wild, and crafty, like the wolf. Some animals are cunning and evil disposed, as the fox; others, as the dog, are fierce, friendly, and fawning, &c., &c. But man is the only animal capable of reasoning, though many others possess the faculty of memory and instruction in common with him. No other animal but man has the power of recollection.'—ARISTOTLE, *Hist. Animal.* lib. i. c. 1, Cresswell's translation.

To horse, my lord; the day is passing fair,
We 'll fly the partridge, or go rouse the deer;
Follow, my lords, you shall not want for sport.
GREENE'S *Friar B. and Friar B.* i. 202, Dyce.

SOMETHING has been said on this subject before, but there is much to be added, especially as regards the wild animals which in those early days—that is to say, in Anglo-Saxon and earlier Norman days—were common in every wood, glen, and forest. And, as it has been before stated, the greater part of the land, certainly of the Old Oak's locality, was overrun with wood, much like to the bush in Australia, at the Cape, or in British Columbia. Very little open ground was there between Meole, Hanwood, and the Stiperstones; and even around Pengwerne, or Scrobbesbyrig, the covert was not easily pierced by one who did not know his bearings. The banks of the Severn were covered with oaks and alders, and all about

what is now Leighton Shelf, Berwick, Sundorne, and Pym Hill, was but a tangled brake, easier to enter than to get out of.

Still, there was cultivated land throughout the whole of this county; and I dare say, one way and another, the Romans did not fare so badly in the neighbourhood of the lead mines. The overseer of those mines would never have had his villa and his baths at the Lea Cross, if Shorthill, and Sibaldscote, and Phaley, and Hinton, had not supplied him with something more than bare necessaries. He had not been used to live so *meagre* in Rome!

> Capaciores affer huc, puer, scyphos,
> Et Chia vina aut Lesbia;
> Vel, quod fluentem nauseam coerceat,
> Metire nobis Cæcubum.

These, rather, were the notions of an old Roman, and such his cry for luxuries when they were to be had. Such wines would wash down well the trout of the Rea, and no doubt there were fine speckled ones then, as there are now, close to the Lea Ford.

Wild, indeed, as the country was in general, and notwithstanding its thick woods and swamps, which would retard its harvests, what Cæsar said was tested by experience, and a good deal of corn was ingathered on the open. '*Loca sunt temperatiora, quam in Galliâ, remissioribus frigoribus.*' What is added in a subsequent chapter in nowise detracts from this statement: '*Interiores plerique frumenta non serunt, sed lacte et carne vivunt, pellibusque sunt vestiti.*' Such would be pretty much the case in the Old Oak's locality. But, as I hinted, the inhabitants of these districts had their corn of some sort, if not wheat corn, and the land was not so barren as has been supposed. I must not omit to add, that in my boyhood quantities of woad (with which Cæsar tells us the ancient Britons stained their bodies) grew in some fields on the banks of the Rea, technically called 'THE PATCHES,' from the wild work which the 'horned flood' committed, when it pushed the land and divided it.

It must not be omitted that Tacitus, in his 'Agricola,' bears the like testimony to the produce of corn. '*Solum, præter oleam vitemque, et cætera calidioribus terris oriri sueta,*

patiens frugum, fecundum; tardè mitescunt, cito proveniunt; eademque utriusque rei causa, multus humor terrarum cælique.' Britain, indeed, at one time, was one of Rome's great granaries, as may be seen elsewhere, and in Camden. The moistness of the British climate, and its warm heat in summer, led afterwards to the planting of the vine, which, in the south, grew luxuriantly. Much wine was made in the monasteries, though, probably, none of the best. Two spots in the county of Shropshire, at least, bore the name of THE VINEYARD.

But take the Cornavii as a whole district, comprehending Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, Shropshire, and Cheshire; take the Silures, who occupied Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Radnor, Brecknock, and Glamorganshire; and whoever, in early days, had visited their confines, they would have found them of the wildest. Every district abounded both with wild men and wild animals, and it took a long series of years to civilise the people and to till the ground. But, by degrees, ancient Britons found bread to be better than acorns, and, as the trees were felled and the ground cleared, even in those midland districts, where Cæsar reported that there was '*neither earing nor harvest*' (to use the words of our Holy Book), the surface of the land yielded to patient culture, and its ruggedness was subdued and made smooth. And, more or less, as the ground was cultivated, the people were cultivated too, and as with 'rude thought and stubborn will' they ceased to swear

By Woden wild, their grandsires' oath,

there was a vast and visible improvement long before the lordly Norman came in and claimed boisterously more than was his due, and despised the Saxon.

My thoughts were running on in this groove when I became aware, by the rustling of his leaves, that my Talking Friend was about to address me.

'I have often told you,' he said, whilst the pearls of dew fell from his leaves in a little shower, like as of the softest rain, 'of the wild features of all this district in the early days of my time-honoured father. When he first became observant, there was very little grain of any sort grown between Meole

and Pontesbury, and the little there was was about Sibaldscott (what you call Sibberscott) and Hinton, and on the upper grounds above the Lea in the Newnham direction. As you would readily conclude, without my reporting to you what my ancient father said on the subject, the meadow-lands of the Rea and Cruckton Brook, wherever the willows, and the alders, and the osier beds were cleared, pointed the way to pasturage rather than to tilth. And so it was; and no inconsiderable quantity of goats, and mountain sheep, and cattle was to be found in the valley; and they were tended, I recollect my father's saying, by a race of people somewhat different from our own—a roofless and wandering people, who came and went, and never amalgamated with our Saxon tribe. If, by any accident, any Saxon maiden matched with one of them, such was the disposition to wander, that she usually left these parts with her husband—and indeed was, in some sense, and according to your modern form of speech, thought to have lost caste. I fully remember my father's calling them by the name of Cangi, Ceangi, or Cangani, or by some very outlandish name like that; and he knew, he said, that Cank Heath, in Staffordshire, was a very common resort of the race.'

And this only set me thinking afresh how every nation almost has its *Cagots*, or *Races Maudites*—proscribed and avoided, if not hated. The East is not the only region where such things are; the West, too, notwithstanding the wide spread of Christianity, has its so-called pariahs.

Perhaps the Old Oak's view of the question is as good as any other, and it certainly falls in with no mean antiquarian authority. Camden, for instance, viewed them as a scattered and several people, 'discovering traces of them in many different and distant places, as in Somersetshire, Wales, Derbyshire, and Cheshire; and, continues the historian Henry, 'he might have found as plain vestiges of them in Devonshire, Dorsetshire, Essex, Wiltshire, &c.' Mr. Hanley and others are no less perplexed and undetermined in their opinions on this subject. But Mr. Baxter seems to have discovered the true cause of all this perplexity, by observing that the Cangi or Ceangi were not a distinct nation, seated in

one particular place, but such of the youth of many different nations as were employed in pasturage, in feeding the flocks and herds of their respective tribes. Almost all the ancient nations of Britain had their Ceangi—their *pastoritia pubes*—the keepers of their flocks and herds, who ranged about the country in great numbers, as they were invited by the season and plenty of pasturage for their cattle. This is the reason that vestiges of their homes are to be found in so many different parts of Britain, but chiefly in those parts which are most fit for pasture. The Ceangi of the different British nations, naturally brave, and rendered still more hardy by their way of life, were constantly armed for the protection of their flocks from wild beasts ; and these arms they occasionally employed in the defence of their country and their liberty.

From this passage, certainly, it does not appear that the Cangi were in ill odour, but no doubt, generally, they were wild enough, and like many other people who tenant wild districts, and mingle but little with their fellow-men more civilised, their habits were uncouth. Colet and Erasmus were surely right in selecting such an instance as this for the Latin Grammar from the Epistles from Pontus ; and strange as it may seem, few writers contain so many instructive lines, for separate quotation, as Ovid does :

> Adde, quod ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
> Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.

It was upon this occasion, after talking of the Cangi or Ceangi, that my Talking Friend was led on to speak about the wild animals of the country in his venerable father's days and in his own, to which he added something of the wild fowl also. His information about the wild estate of Wales, he said, was chiefly from the accounts of old Tredithic—and wild, very wild, was the land in those days.

It was afterwards that *forestation* came in. Indeed, although there were plenty of forests before the lordly Norman pushed his tyrannous dominion over the land, yet, for the most part, the land was a land of covert, and the wild beasts of the wold prowled about as they listed, and hastened to secure their prey. Against such depredations was it that the

Cangi were a protection, being always armed, according to their rude fashion, and, in themselves, guiltless of fear.

Nobody will tell us better what a forest was than old John Manwood.

'A forest,' says he, in his still curious book, 'is a certain territory of woody grounds and fruitful pastures, privileged for the wild beasts and fowls of forest, chace, and warren, to rest and abide in, in the safe protection of the king, for his princely delight and pleasure; which territory of ground, so privileged, is meered and bounded with unremovable markes, meeres, and boundaries, either known by matter of record or else by prescription; and also replenished with wild beasts of venery or chase, and with great coverts of vert, for the succour of the said wild beasts, to have their abode in.' To which, by-and-by, he quaintly adds what follows, giving a very fair idea of the distinction above alluded to: 'And whereas it is before mentioned, that a forest is a territory of woody grounds and fruitful pastures, *privileged for wild beasts and fowls*, &c., therein is declared the difference between a forest and other places of woody grounds and fruitful pastures, for there be divers lordships, liberties, and precincts that are full of woods, coverts, and fruitful pastures, yea, and perhaps of wild beasts also; and yet the same is no forest, forasmuch as the place is not privileged for these wild beasts to have a firm peace in from the hurt of any other person more than the proper owner of the soil.'

Strange notion, *firm peace*! and repeated by-and-by as the privilege of the king, who, of his royal authority, hath 'protected these wild beasts and fowls, of forest, chace, and warren, within the territory of the forest, to have *their rest and firm peace therein*, without any hurt, disquiet, detriment, or damage, of any other person or persons whatsoever.' It was with this peace, when they broke their bound and attacked the flocks, that the Cangi interfered.

One more passage must be given as explanatory, and it may be added by the way, that old Manwood's 'Treatise of Forest Laws' is a most racy book, fitting altogether to be read after the 'Book of St. Alban's,' which is a gem in its way.

But let us hear what our worthy has to say:

'For better understanding of these words, *privileged for wild beasts and fowls*, by adding those words of *forest, chace, and warren*, is declared what wild beasts and fowls there are —that is to say, of forest, chace, and warren, and for no other. And therefore a forest is not a privileged place, generally, for all manner of wild beasts, nor for all manner of fowls, but only for those that are of forest, chace, and warren. The wild beasts of the forest are five and no more—that is to say, *the hart, the hind, the hare, the boar, and the wolf.* The beasts of the chace are also five: *the buck, the doe, the fox, the marten, and the roe*, and no more are accounted beasts of the chace. The beasts and fowls of warren are these: the hare, the coney, the pheasant, and the partridge, and none other are accounted beasts or fowls of warren.'

So much for racy old Manwood. But the time-honoured Old Oak took a wider view, and, having lived out the times of the Saxons, he would speak, not only of the commoner animals, and of animals of the chase, but of animals in general, and of other fowls than those which belonged to the royal forests, such as the pheasant and the partridge. He always, indeed, appeared to be very fond of natural history; and although rooted to the ground by the little runlet that found its rippling footpath into the Rea—

Levis crepante lympha desilit pede—

there was scarcely an animal or a bird in the country of which he could not give an account, more or less interesting to the listeners beneath his shade. He was one, of all others, to have said, as in the song of the Outlaw Murray:

There 's the doe, the roe, the herte, the hinde,
And of a' wilde bestis grete plentie.

My Talking Friend's venerable father, being greatly attached to dogs in general, would have liked poet Burns' 'Twa Dogs,' Cæsar and Luath. How pleasant to read the tale!

Nae doubt but they were fain o' ither,
An' unco pack and thick thegither;
Wi' social nose whyles snuff'd and snowkit;
Whyles mice and moudieworts they howkit:

Whyles scour'd awa' in lang excursion,
An' worried ither in diversion ;
Until wi' daffin weary grown,
Upon a knowe they sat them down,
And then began a lang digression,
About the *lords o' the creation.*

This digression, it may be added, is the beauty of the 'Twa Dogs.' But Bewick, in the latter portion of his Memoir, spoils, or almost spoils, a very terse and graphic book by a long digression, which, even if true, might have been dispensed with. Another passage I now extract, which is far more interesting:

'Whilst I was at Woodhall, I was struck with the sagacity of a dog belonging to Mr. Smith. The character for sagacity of the shepherd's dog was well known to me, but this instance of it was exemplified before my own eyes. Mr. Smith wished to have a particular ram brought out from amongst the flock, for the purpose of my seeing it. Before we set out he observed to the old shepherd that he thought the old dog (he was grey-headed and almost blind) would do well enough for what he wanted with him. Before we reached the down where the flock was feeding, I observed that Mr. Smith was talking to the dog before he ordered him off on his errand; and whilst we were conversing on some indifferent subject the dog brought a ram before us. Mr. Smith found a deal of fault with the dog, saying, "Did I not order you so-and-so?" and he scolded him for bringing a wrong sheep, and then, after fresh directions, sent him off again to bring the one he wished me to see. We then returned home, and shortly after our arrival there the dog brought the very ram wanted, along with a few other sheep, into the fold, where I took a drawing of him.'

After speaking of the dog—the friend of man—unnatural as it may seem, it is natural to speak of the wolf, his enemy; such an assimilation is there, in some respects, with the two. And it is well known that wolves were formerly very common in England, as might be inferred from the names of places and persons into which the term 'Ulf' constantly enters. The reader need only turn to Mr. Thorpe's translation of

the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,' the index to which will inform him at once upon the point.

On referring to my Talking Friend for information, he told me, with the accustomed rustling of his leaves, that the locality of the Old Oak had its full share of the beast so bony, and gaunt, and grim.

'My time-honoured father,' he said, 'used to recount the history of many wolf-hunts, as having been held between the Rea and the Stiperstones, and there was a favourite haunt of the wolf in the old dingle at the oaks called Hell Gutter. No animal, according to his knowledge, was so detestable for its savage filth and ravin, being utterly insatiable, and therefore, said he, our Saxon forefathers maintained that it was possessed with an evil spirit of destruction which they denominated *were-wolf*, as much as to say *man*-wolf, *ware* being an old Saxon term for *man*. To which he added that the sense of smell in the wolf, for carrion especially, was as keen as the vulture's, and that he could track a living animal through brake and shaw for miles without coming to a fault—all the way, he had heard tell, from Lythewood, through Hanwood valley, to the Minsterley woods. Tredithic once told my father that rather than go empty paunched too long the wolf would fill his maw with turf; and he likewise stated that, owing to the great ravages made by wolves in the winter season, January was called, not uncommonly, *Wolf-monad*.'

The mention of abundance of wolves in England naturally calls to mind what one read as a boy; how Edgar, for instance, exacted, instead of tribute in money from the petty monarch of Wales—the money payment, by the way, had been imposed on them by Athelstan, who not only organised great wolf-hunts, but made the Welsh supply him with wolf-hounds—three hundred wolves' heads yearly. In old Stowe's words, 'He caused Widwall, *alias* Edwal, King of Wales, to pay him, in name of tribute, 300 wolves yearly (or rather their skins), which thing when he had performed for the space of three years, the fourth year were there none there to be found.' From another page of history, however, we find that they abounded again in the time of Edward I., but happily, even

in early days, the wolf was not considered a beast of the forest or chase, and might be killed with impunity; all, indeed, were called to kill him, and no doubt the Cangi, or Ceangi, had their full share of wolves' skins. The last wolf killed in England is unrecorded; the last killed in Scotland was at the end of the seventeenth century, by Sir Ewan Campbell of Lochiel.

As regards names taken from Wolf, or Ulf—for, as Mr. Kemble remarks, 'It is a peculiarity of the old Norse to omit the initial W; thus, *ormr* for *wymr*, a dragon or serpent; *ulfr* for *wulfr*, a wolf; hence, Odin is literally Woden.' The 'Saxon Chronicle' has been above referred to. To this it may be added that many names amongst all nations have been taken from animals—pet animals, some suppose—for example, among Christians we have Leo, Lupus, Ursula, to say nothing of Roman nomenclature, Caninius, Aper, Apronius, &c. &c. Our common South Saxon name Alan is said in Sclavonic to mean a hound, and Chaucer, Camden says, 'useth Alan in the same sense.' The Spanish dictionaries interpret 'Alano' by 'a mastiff of a large kind.' The passage referred to in Chaucer is, I suppose, in the 'Knightes Tale,' and refers to Licurge, the great King of Thrace, coming with Palamon:

> About his char there wenten white alauns,
> Twenty and mo, as gret as any stere,
> To hunten at the lion or the dere,
> And folwed him, with mosel fast ybound,
> Colored with gold, and torettes filed round.

Many names bear the compound of 'wolf,' which, in the first instance, do not strike the reader. For instance, in Sussex, we have Woolbedington—Wool-lavington, i.e. the *tún*, or dwelling, of Wolfbœd and Wolflab. Camden again, in his account of Derbyshire, speaking of the west part of the county beyond the Derwent covered with hills and mountains, says, 'There is no danger now from wolves, which were formerly so troublesome here that certain persons held lands here at *Wormhill* to hunt and catch them, whence they were called *Wolve hunt*, as is evident from the public records. The late Mr. Davies Gilbert, by the way, said that the last native

wolf seen in England was captured at Rospeith, in Ludgvan, Cornwall. In one of the museums at Keswick, as late as 1829 (I think it was in Hutton's), there was to be seen a curious hybrid, more closely resembling the wolf than the dog.

Under the heading Caus Castle and Barony of Corbet, Mr. Eyton has the passage following, giving Blakeway's 'Sheriffs' as authority: 'A curious document informs us that Peter Corbet, like his ancestors, was a lover of the chase, and that wolves, so far from having been extirpated by King Edgar, as the story goes, were existent in the time of Edward I. A patent of the latter king, dated May 4, 1281, informed all bailiffs and officers of the forest that the King has commissioned Peter Corbet to destroy these beasts wherever they could be found in the counties of Salop, Stafford, Gloucester, Worcester, and Hereford, using men, dogs, and other devices for that purpose; and the said bailiffs are desired to assist.'

'The date of my birth,' said my Talking Friend to me one day, 'was in the time of Edward I., of which I shall tell you more hereafter; and I quite recollect my time-honoured father's telling me that when I was but an oakling, one Thomas le Wolf, Priest, was Vicar of Habberley, and that he made an exchange of it for the Vicarage of Alberbury. The patron of Habberley in those days was Sir Robert Corbet; and I have no doubt,' said my pleasant friend, 'that Thomas had assisted at a wolf hunt, and so got his name, for all sorts of men were hunters in those days, and perhaps they had to lead the people on to protect themselves.'

And the thought of how the Priest of Habberley may have obtained his name presently called to my mind the misfortune that befell Archbishop Abbot, when hunting the buck at Lord Zouch's of Bramhill in Hampshire—how he slew the keeper with a barbed arrow from his cross-bow, and how, as old Fuller puts it, the fame of the keeper's death 'flew faster than the arrow that killed him; the archbishop's mischance in many men not meeting with so much pity as so sad a casualty did deserve.' We cannot, said his enemies, have *virum sanguineum*—a man of blood and blood-tainted—for our Primate; and yet all the force of their skill in canonical law could not, as the same historian adds, 'mount

the guilt of this fact higher than the fountain thereof.' It was, in reality, as King James said, rather a sad than a sinful act, and might have happened to him or his courtiers. The question of the Archbishop's sporting was simply one of the times and a mere indifferent action. All have heard of Seth Ward's and Bishop Juxon's love of their packs, and it is said that a living bishop—a good rider—does not object to fall in with the hounds, *as by accident*! Be this as it may, I have no doubt but that Thomas le Wolf was a hunter, and that he thought he had done a very good deed when he killed the wolf that harried the flocks, and was, as the old Saxons spoke, 'heard and hate-grim'—that is, hard, and grim in hate. The Fiji Islanders, Mr. Williams tells us, blow loud blasts on the conch when they capture a great turtle, and no doubt it was well bruited abroad from Hell Gutter and the Dropping Stych to Alberbury and the Rea that Thomas was a mighty hunter in the land. It turned to his praise and not to his discredit, and the destruction of wild animals in general was leading on to more civilised times, when

Tempus in agrorum cultu consumere dulce est.

On another occasion, when he had been talking of the wildness of the country, my Talking Friend told me that his father recollected plenty of wild boars throughout the whole of the district which lay between the Forest of Shrewsbury and the Stiperstones, and, he added, with a pleasant shake of his leaves, which was very like to a smile, 'When I hear you talk of pannage for hogs, and how that, according to your "Domesday Book," the wood of Pontesbury would fatten forty swine, I cannot but think how matters were tending to the better from the bad, for in my good old father's early days *all* were wild, and would submit to no keeper. The Cangi, or Ceangi, as you call them, had a hardish time of it, I suspect.'

And this remark, as in the case of others, called to fresh thought. Better days, at least, are alluded to, and there was an opening for the Anglo-Saxon term which meant 'MERCY,' as they framed their speech, *mildheartnisse*. Anyway, civilisation was progressing, though the people were far from civilised. Ages dark and dreary were to roll on before this

state of things might be predicated of the land at large. Some have thought that it came from without. For instance, Mr. Laing, in his Preliminary Dissertation to the 'Heimskringla, or Chronicle of the Kings of Norway,' thinks we are beholden to Scandinavian assistance, when he says, 'The renovation of the Anglo-Saxon institutions, the revival of principles and social spirit, which were exhausted in the old Anglo-Saxon race, may be traced to this fresh infusion from the cognate Northern people.' Whether he is right or not, the following lengthy extract is one worth much consideration:

'Our English writers and readers direct their attention too exclusively to the Anglo-Saxon branch of this great Teutonic race of people, and scarcely acknowledge the social influence of the admixture of their Danish conquerors—of that fresh infusion in the tenth century, from the same original stock, of the original spirit, character, and institutions. The schoolman and the political antiquary find it classical or scholarlike to trace up to obscure intimation, as the treatise of Tacitus on the ancient Germans, the origin of parliaments, trial by jury, and all other free institutions, assuming somewhat gratuitously that the seafaring Saxons who, four hundred years after the day of Tacitus, crossed the sea from the countries north of the Elbe, and conquered England, were identical in laws and social institutions with the forest Germans on the Rhine whom Tacitus describes; and forgetting that a much nearer and more natural source of all the elements they are tracing back to the forests of Germany in the time of Agricola, was to be found in full vigour among the people who had conquered and colonised the kingdom of Northumberland and East Anglia, reckoned equal then to one-third of England, and had held them for several generations, and who conquered and ruled over all England for nearly half a century immediately previous to its final conquest by their own Norman kinsmen. The spirit, character, and national vigour of the old Anglo-Saxon branch of this people, had evidently become extinct under the influence and pressure of the Church of Rome upon the energies of the human mind. This abject state of the mass of old Christianised Anglo-Saxons is evident from the

trifling resistance they made to the small piratical bands of Danes and Northmen who infested and settled on their coasts. It is evident that the people had neither energy to fight, nor property, laws, or institutions to defend, and were merely serfs on the land of nobles, or of the Church, who had nothing to lose by a change of masters. It is to the renewal of the original institutions, social condition, and spirit of Anglo-Saxon society, by the fresh infusion of these Danish conquerors into a very large proportion of the whole population in the eleventh century—and not to the social state of the forest Germans in the first century—that we must look for the actual origin of our national institutions, character, and principles of society, and for that check of the popular opinion and will upon arbitrary rule which grew up by degrees, showing itself even in the first generation after William the Conqueror, and which slowly but necessarily produced the English constitution, laws, institutions, and character. The same seed was, no doubt, sown by the old Anglo-Saxons and by the Northmen —for they were originally the same people ; but the seed of the former had perished under Romish superstition and Church influence during five centuries in which the mind and property in every country were subjugated to the priesthood whose home was at Rome ; and the seed of the latter flourished, because it was fresh from a land in which all were proprietors with interests at stake, and accustomed, although in a very rude and violent way, to take a part, by Things, or assemblies of the people, in all the acts of that government.'

Perhaps I do not acquiesce in all that is here stated ; but, having given much attention to the subject, I am inclined to admit much of it. But I did not break fresh ground with my Talking Friend, for, with a strong liking for the Cymry, he was Anglo-Saxon to his heart of oak, and would presently have done battle.

What he said of his old father's recollections of the wild boars of the Shropshire forests was, no doubt, true to the letter ; for the wild boars of England and Wales remained till the Norman came, and in some parts, long after ; and *Twrch*, or the *Hog*, was a name of reproach, as it is still

amongst the South Saxons. So Llyware Hêr called the Saxon marauder who drove out Cyndrwyn, the father of Cynddylan from the plain of Shropshire, or, as it was sometimes called, *Pow isa*—that is, *the low country*—the only part of the dominions of Powisland which could be so called. It may be added here that Ardennes was not the only place which gave the denomination of 'Boar' to a prince. In early days here Brocmail, or Brockwell Ysgistroy, was the *tusked* king of Powis; and the common people still suppose a *tusked* or *pig-headed* birth to appear periodically in the Powis family. It was generally reported in the plain of Shropshire, when I was a boy, that one was shut up in an *oubliette* of Powis Castle as too ugly to be seen in public. But *pig-headed* people, to say the truth, are common enough in most families!

Speaking of the murder of Alfhelm, a duke or earl of the royal blood, by Ædric Streona, or Sueona, who employed one Godwin *Porkhand*, or master of the boar hounds, to do the deed, the historians of Shrewsbury remark, and I concur with them entirely, backed by the authority of my friend, the Old Oak: 'The boar ranged, no doubt, at that time in the neighbouring forests; his existence is recorded in that remarkable hollow, the Boar's Den, near Belton; and it was, probably, while engaged in the chase of that animal that the Saxon earl fell a victim to the malice of his enemy,' in some part of the forest of Scrobbesbyrig.

The inhabitants of Birstall, in Buckinghamshire, Hearne tells us, attaching something rough to the name of Boar, were mightily pleased at anyone's telling them that the meaning of the word was 'a seat on the side of an hill'; insomuch so, that 'the inhabitants look upon the story of its being called so from a wild boar killed by Nigellus in the Forest of Bernwood (on the edge of which Birstall is placed) to be as weak as the ascribing the Song of "The Boar's Head" by some to a wild boar that was killed, I know not when, by a Tabarder in Shottover Wood; whereas, on the contrary, the song was so far, formerly, from being sung only in one place that it was a Christmas carol all over England, the boar's head being an ancient dish, and much in vogue at that season, being

much admired, even by the greatest princes, insomuch that it was brought up by King Henry I., with trumpets, before his son, when his said son was crowned.' Notwithstanding, however, the pleasant satisfaction which they of Birstall took in an easy Saxon derivation, wild boars, as above hinted, were common enough—specially in the wilds of Shropshire. This the Old Oak, and my Talking Friend, his son, could answer for.

In those days there was no difficulty about *Estoveria*, or Estovers, by which is meant allowances of timber and fuel out of the lord's woods—the people if they would but keep under the wolf and the wild pig, might have *Housebote* and *Haybote* in plenty and to their heart's content. The Woodhouse and the Woodhall bespoke their position always—and such names still remain hard by the Old Oak's locality.

In connection with the subject on hand—the keeping down, I mean, of the wild beasts of the forest—may be mentioned the old *Vigilia*, or *Custodia Regis*, which is adverted to in the Shropshire portion of 'Domesday.' It was the Heáfodweard, or *Headward*, of the Saxons, and was claimed by royalty on coming into a district. 'It extended also,' says Mr. Kemble, 'to the guard kept for him on his hunting excursions; and coupled with it was his claim to assistance of a certain number of men in the hunt itself, either as beaters or managers of the nets in which the deer were taken,' or other wild beast, no doubt, as it might be.

I could not make out from my Talking Friend that there were ever any real wild cattle in the district. His time-honoured father had never mentioned their existence within the range of his locality, but he had heard travellers speak of them as to be found in the North of England and in Scotland.

It cannot, probably, be said that any real wild cattle exist now in this country, whether named the *Urus Scoticus* or *Bos Scoticus*. Possibly those that were long considered wild were but animals that had escaped and become so; just as in the islands of the Pacific and other islands where Captain Cook or other earlier navigators left the original stock.

It is not, however, to be denied that Fitz Stephen, in the time of Henry II., speaks of the '*Tauri sylvestres*' in the

forest about London, and I dare say mention is to be found in many authors unread by me. To those who might wish to investigate the point, I would mention, in passing, Thomas Bewick's very interesting Memoir, lately published, and his 'History of Quadrupeds,' which, like his 'Birds,' was the delight of my boyhood. In his 'Quadrupeds' will be found the passage which follows: 'There was formerly a very singular species of wild cattle in this country. Numerous herds of them were kept in several parks in England and Scotland, but they have been destroyed by various means, and the only boars now remaining in the kingdom are in the park of Chillingham Castle, in Northumberland; at Wollaton, in Nottinghamshire, the seat of Lord Middleton; at Gisburne, in Craven, Yorkshire; at Lyme Hall, in Cheshire; and at Chartley, in Staffordshire.' To Gisburne they were said to have been brought from Whalley Abbey, in Lancashire, at its dissolution, 23 Henry VIII., and tradition says they were drawn there by the power of music—a curious remark this, and many are not at all aware of the power of music over cattle and sheep.

> Carmine dum tali silvas animosque ferarum
> Threïcius vates et saxa sequentia ducit.

Upon one occasion, after a great otter hunt—what a hunt it was! all the way from Yockleton to the Cruckton Bank, through the meadows, then into the Rea, and slap through the ponds to the beautiful Lea Bridge, where the hounds ran into the great fish freebooter—my Talking Friend informed me that old Tredithic told his time-honoured father that formerly there were beavers, not only in the Welsh rivers, but in the Severn likewise. Of his own beloved Welsh rivers he particularly mentioned the Teivi as abounding with them; and he used to tell of a pool in the Conway called *Llyn yr Afrangc*, that is, the Beaver's Pool. Cooper, the American novelist, could not have spoken of the tribe more *con amore* than did our old Druidical friend of Ponsert Hill.

This communication induced me to turn to Camden, who quotes Giraldus Cambrensis, II. ch. iii., as stating that the Teivi was the only river which had beavers in Britain. This would not assort with what old Tredithic said, but Gough's

Additions are confirmatory of his assertion 'That the mixture of fable which obtains in Giraldus' writings may not impeach his credit in general, it may not be amiss to observe here that the existence of beavers anciently in Wales is confirmed by the laws of Howel Dda, which fix the price of the skin of the *Llostlydan*, or the *broad-tailed animal*, at 120 pence—a great sum for that time. Two or three lakes here still bear the name of *Llyn yr Afrangc*, or the Beaver Pool: *Avangk* being obviously derived from *Avon*, a river, and an abbreviation of *Avonag*, q.d. *fluviatilis*. Some old poets describe the animal in terms exactly answering to the beaver, though the name is now so little known that some have fancied it a spectre haunting rivers.' I suppose, however, the description of the animal is sufficient to prove its existence; and the lover of ancient legends has only to turn to 'Madoc in Wales' for a passage which will awaken pleasant remembrances of the Cymry; but he must take care not to confound the Towy with the Teivi, which Southey did not, but wrote as a poet, suiting to his verse that locality which pleased him best.

> Musing on thoughts like these did Madoc roam
> Alone along the Towy's winding shore.
> The beavers on its bank had hollow'd out
> Their social place of dwelling, and had damm'd
> The summer current with their perfect art
> Of instinct, erring not in means nor end.
> But as the floods of spring had broken down
> Their barriers, so its breaches unrepair'd
> Were left; and round the piles which, deeper driven,
> Still held their place, the eddying waters whirl'd.
> Now in those habitations desolate
> One sole survivor dwelt; him Madoc saw
> Labouring alone beside his hermit home;
> And in that mood of melancholy thought,—
> For in his boyhood he had loved to watch
> Their social work, and for he knew that man
> In bloody sport had well-nigh rooted out
> The poor community,—the ominous sight
> Became a grief and burden.

Whether Beverstone, in Gloucestershire, or Beverley, in Yorkshire, derive their names from the beavers of the Severn and the Hall is not clear. No doubt in the former case

Tredithic would have maintained his ground, but as regards *Beverlega* or *Beverlac* different opinions are held. For example, Mr. Phillips, in his 'Rivers &c. of Yorkshire,' declares that the true meaning of the word is '*Pedwarllech*, the ancient Petouaria; marked, as other British towns seem to have been, by four stones'—stones of sanctuary. But probably this is but riding a hobby to death, or what Aristotle called *θέσιν διαφυλάττων*, maintaining an hypothesis through thick and thin.

Badgers, or as they are called in the North, Brocks, were common, my Talking Friend said, all over this locality till within a hundred years. Indeed, in my childhood they were not uncommon. The last I recollect to have seen was killed in the Dropping Stych at the Oaks (a spot before mentioned) some twelve or fourteen years ago. I used to think that the beautiful dingle at Badger, near Shiffnal—a haunt of my boyhood, where I heard the first nightingale—took its name from the badger; but antiquaries and historians dispel the pleasant delusion. It is curious, however, that Osborn Fitz Richard should have held, under Roger, in 1085, the neighbouring manors of Badger and *Brock*ton. The name in 'Domesday' is Beghesovic.

Bell, in his 'History of British Quadrupeds,' remarks that 'since the extirpation of the bear, *Ursus Arctos*, of the existence of which mention is made in Scottish history as late as the year 1073, the family of the *Ursidæ* has had no other representative, in our indigenous zoology, than the present animal, which, in its habits no less than in its structure, claims no very remote relationship to that tribe.'

'The badger,' said our old keeper, when he brought home the captive from the Dropping Stych, 'is a great keeper at home, as I wish the mining poachers were, and then I should have less night-work.' And what he said is true. In fact, like a modern householder, he likes more than one apartment —a parlour, as I hinted, and a with-drawing-room. Here he sleeps for most of the day, and provided he has enough for his wants, is only out a small part of the night. It is said he is very fond of honey, but probably, in taking nests, whether of bees or humble bees, and wasps even, he is only in search

of the *larvæ*, though, as Bell remarks, if he do take honey he offers a striking analogy to several others of the group, particularly to its Oriental relation, the Ratel (*Mellivora capensis*), which is known to live principally upon it.' It is painful to think that so inoffensive an animal, and one so easily tamed, should have been treated worse than Diogenes in his tub—let the reader refer to the clever tail-piece in Bell—for he that maltreats the poor brute is the greater brute of the two. But our language retains the term 'badgered' as a testimony against us, and many still living will call to mind the bull-baits and the cock-fights of the people, than which, to use the words of old Democritus Burton in the 'Philosophaster,' lately published by the Roxburghe Club:

Ipsa barbaries nihil produxit immanius !

'A constant notion remained in these parts,' said my Talking Friend, 'till very recently—I mean, that the badger is uneven-legged,' and that when he runs on a ploughed field he always runs with his longer legs in the furrow. I dare say you modern naturalists laugh at the idea, but such was the opinion of the vulgar.'

And I at once called to mind the chapter in Sir Thomas Browne's 'Pseudodoxia Epidemica, or Inquiries into Vulgar and Common Errors,' in which he states, 'That a brock, or badger, hath the legs on one side shorter than of the other, though an opinion, perhaps, not very ancient, is yet very general; received not only by theorists and inexperienced believers, but assented unto by most who have the opportunity to behold and hunt them daily. Which, notwithstanding upon inquiry, I find repugnant unto the three determinators of truth—authority, sense, and reason.' I have said that the Last of the Old Squires well recollected a wonderful marker who, from having one leg longer than the other, went by the name of 'Badger.' So long, in one shape or another, do the superstitions and wide-world notions of the common people retain their hold. Browne, in his 'Britannia's Pastorals,' was just the person, of all others, to advert to them. Thus, in his Description of Riot does he call our attention to this musty and time-wrinkled notion:

And as that beast hath legs (which shepherds feare
Ycleep'd a Badger, which our lambs doth teare),
One long, th' other short, that when he runnes
Upon the plaines, he halts; but when he wonnes
On craggy rocks, or steepy hills, we see
None runnes more swift, nor easier, than he;
Such legs the Mentor had, on sinew shrunk,
That in the plaines he reel'd, as being drunk;
And halted in the paths to virtue tending,
And therefore never durst be that way bending.

As my thoughts were thus running on the Grey Badger—Grey he was sometimes called without any addition, as by Ben Jonson in the 'Sad Shepherdess':

This fine
Smooth bawrin's cub, the young grice of *a grey*—

known also in the Old Oak's locality by the name of Bawrened-pate (or head striped with white)—just overhead there was a great whirr, and on looking upward I saw a vast flight of starlings, which literally darkened the air, on their way, perhaps, to some willow beds on Bomer Pool.

Speaking with reference to birds, my Talking Friend observed, 'In those days, many birds that are now comparatively rare, were common enough, such as the bittern—the glede, or great kite—and the raven, that cunning, keen, sharp-scented, suspicious bird, beloved by the Danes and the Vikings, and borne upon their standards.' 'His time-honoured father,' he added, 'had heard tell of such a standard's being raised on the Severn's side, in the neighbourhood of Bridgenorth, when the Danes ravaged the land thereabouts as was their wont and their pleasure.'

And I recollected how, in the 'Saxon Chronicle,' we are told that Alfred, in Devonshire, took 'their standard, which they call the Raven,' and how the Old Oak's reminiscences were corroborated by the same authority—for they, the Danes, 'sat that winter at Quatbridge. That was three years after they had come hither over sea to the mouth of the Limen,' that is, the river Lym in Kent. If the reader should lay his hands upon A. J. Symington's 'Faroë and Iceland,' and will turn to the Appendix containing poems on Northern subjects, he will find one worth reading by Mrs.

A. J. Symington, called 'The Viking's Raven.' The following, the beginning and ending stanzas, will serve as a specimen:

Beside a weird-like Norway bay,
Where wild and angry billows play,
And seldom meet the night and day,
A Raven sat.

He was the last of all his race
That lingered in that lonely place;
Age, grief, were stamped upon his face,
Sad, desolate.

. . . . . .

Where is the Raven, grim and lone?
Uprooted is the old grey stone
Where late he sat, and he is gone,
To come no more!

I may add here what I lately read in a modern publication, to my no small surprise: 'Towards evening, long files of ravens might be seen returning to their desert roosting-places, gregarious and sociable as rooks in England, but cautious withal, as they would make a considerable *détour* to keep out of gunshot.' In Africa or in England his cunning is his protection; but I suppose his cunning to be his reason—at least that instinct

Which mimics reason's lore,
And oft transcends.

The local names of Eagle's Crag, Eagle's Nest, Eagle's Eyrie, show how common eagles were in all our rocky and mountainous districts; and from the accounts which the Old Oak used to give, on the authority of old Tredithic, of their wild screams about the crags of Ponsert Hill, Gray's line is no doubt descriptive:

The famished eagle screams and passes by.

Hawks of all sorts were common, as the frequent mention of a *sore* hawk, or *sore* sparrow-hawk—in the Latin of the day *Espervarius Sorus*—as a fine or quit-rent attests. It is the Italian *sauro*, still retained by us in the term *sorrel*-coloured horse, and by our neighbours in their word for red-herrings, i.e. *harengs saures*. Hawking, however, was much more a Norman than a Saxon sport. Mr. Eyton, under 'Aldenham,'

in the Domesday parish of Morville, speaking of the fine of a *sore* sparrow-hawk paid by one Malcolumb de Harley, seems to think 'the payment of the hawk was as imaginary as the suit'; simply adding, 'A *sore* hawk, however, was one in its first plumage (from the French *sor* or *saure*, English *sorrel*, i.e. reddish-brown); a stag in its fourth year was called also *sore* —a similar allusion to its colour.'

But my Talking Friend was more in the habit of discoursing about quadrupeds than about birds; and upon my observing to him on one occasion after my return from the *new* excavations at Wroxeter (we shall see in an after chapter that there had been great *diggings* here before) that I had seen quantities of tusks and hoofs of the wild boar, and stags' horns in abundance, he told me how his aged father 'recollected the whole of this district to have been traversed by wild deer, and that there were plenty of places which took their name from them; instancing at once the great Slade towards Pymbeley called *Darerisden*, between the way leading to Haghman and the bank of the Severn at Shrewsbury close by.'

The reader interested in local antiquities has only to turn to the well-known 'History of Shrewsbury,' so often to be referred to, and he will conclude the Darerisden, or Deer's Den, to be Derfald, Deerfold, or Shrewsbury Park, though not impossibly the word *wald*, *wold*, or *weald*, may enter into the composition of the word.

'In the immediate neighbourhood was a large forest, embosomed in the woods, the resort of stags, fallow deer, and wild boars. The citizens of London delighted in hunting and hawking, and had the right of hunting in Middlesex, Hertford, and in Kent as far as the river Cray.' Indeed—and admitting the occasional fierceness and brutality of the wild Norman 'Fronts-de-bœuf' of the day—our game laws, at this early date, were pretty much as open as those of West Götland—the earliest code extant—about A.D. 1220, out of which Horace Marryat quotes these lines:

> He may have the hare who takes it,
> He may have the fox who hunts it,
> He may have the wolf who traps it,
> He may have the bear who kills it,
> He may have the otter who snares it.

Few modern books on this subject contain more interesting matter than Charles Palk Collyer—he who naïvely tells how, Oct. 18, 1789, when they drew the Shillets with the pack, 'they ran sheep, killing several'; and how 'Sir T. D. Acland desired the huntsman to hang the whole of them, and then himself!' and who, quoting the old author of Elizabeth's days—his 'Treatise of Venerie'—specially selects the passage following: 'A man shall hardly see any of them reyne or live so long as they did in those days, that every forest rang with houndes and hornes, and when plenty of flagon-bottels were carried in every quarter to refresh them temperately.' No doubt a good master of the hounds, and a good pack, will yet keep a county and country gentlemen well together!

> If some staunch hound with his authentic voice
> Avow the recent trail,

there's plenty will follow the leader, and let all petty differences drop by the way.

Looking around him, and seeing their great decrease, there is something of a melancholy cast in the remarks Mr. Collyer makes in his Preface to 'Notes on the Chase of the Wild Red Deer in the Counties of Devon and Somerset': 'Time was when the deer roamed wild over the whole of the North and great part of the South of Devon, and over a large part of the West of Somerset, but they have been driven, by high farming and a denser population, from their ancient fastnesses, and have now taken their stand within a narrow circle, and are to be found chiefly on Exmoor, and the wild and wooded regions about and around that once trackless waste. Perhaps the present generation may witness the death of the last of the wild deer in Devon and Somerset.' The insertion of such an anecdote as the following is the test of a fine old sportsman: '1797. Aug. 26. Old John Blackmore, the harbourer, had several good stags harboured, but particularly wished that the one in Storridge Wood might be roused, as he knew him to be the twin brother of one killed at Bradleyham: he had known them both from the time they first drew their breath, and was sure if the survivor was not killed he would pine and die, for while living the twins had never left

each other. His request was granted; the deer was soon found, and ran much over the same ground his brother did, and was eventually killed under Whiterocks. In size and head they were alike.' The man, of all others, I dare say, was he to recollect Silvia's beautiful stag in the Virgil of his boyhood, and Shakespeare's exquisite scene in the Forest of Arden. It is too great a temptation to resist transcribing the passage at length. One loves such household words, and it saves the reader the trouble of turning to them:

Duke S. Come, shall we go and kill us venison?
And yet it irks me, the poor dappled fools,
Being native burghers of this desert city,
Should, in their own confines, with forked heads,
Have their round haunches gor'd.
1st Lord. Indeed, my lord,
The melancholy Jaques grieves at that;
And, in that kind, swears you do more usurp
Than doth your brother that hath banish'd you.
To-day my Lord of Amiens and myself
Did steal behind him as he lay along
Under an oak whose antique root peeps out
Upon the brook that brawls along this wood;
To the which place a poor sequester'd stag,
That from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt,
Did come to languish; and indeed, my lord,
The wretched animal heav'd forth such groans
That their discharge did stretch his leathern coat
Almost to bursting, and the big round tears
Cours'd one another down his innocent nose
In piteous chase; and thus the hairy fool,
Much marked of the melancholy Jaques,
Stood on the extremest verge of the swift brook,
Augmenting it with tears.
Duke S. But what said Jaques?
Did he not moralise this spectacle?
1st Lord. O, yes, into a thousand similes.
First, for his weeping into the needless stream;
Poor deer, quoth he, thou maks't a testament
As wordlings do, giving thy sum of more
To that which had too much. Then, being there alone,
Left and abandon'd of his velvet friends;
'Tis right, quoth he; thus misery doth part
The flux of company: anon, a careless herd
Full of the pasture, jumps along by him
And never stays to greet him; ay, quoth Jaques,

Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens ;
'T is just the fashion ; wherefore do you look
Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there ?
Thus most invectively he pierceth through
The body of the country, city, court,
Yea, and of this our life ; swearing that we
Are mere usurpers, tyrants, and what 's worse,
To fright the animals and to kill them up
In their assign'd and native dwelling-place.
Duke S. And did you leave him in this contemplation ?
2nd Lord. We did, my lord, weeping and commenting
Upon the sobbing deer.
Duke S. Show me the place.
I love to cope him in these sullen fits,
For then he 's full of matter.
1st Lord. I'll bring you to him straight.

So much for these noble creatures of the forest, which, in the Old Oak's time, abounded all over the district ; and although the Norman restricted the chase, and maimed the dogs in the vicinity of his range—let the reader look to Manwood's 'Treatise and Discourse of the Lawes of the Forest' —yet was the countryman's larder none so ill supplied after all. Many a good pasty was laid up in the cupboard for all friends round the Wrekin, and for such as travelled from Montgomery, through Minsterley and Pontesbury, and by the banks of the Rea to the old town of Pengwerne or Scrobbesbyrig, and its Deerfald.

When we read in a Forest Roll of 1209 how one Hugh le Scott fled to the church, as I suppose, of Wellington, as an asylum, for the killing of a doe in the Forest of Mount Gilbert (the modern Wrekin), and continued there for a month, and at last escaped in woman's clothes, we come to Norman times, and the days of the Tudors, whence the chase was restricted and the liberty of the subject only a name and a supposition.

Of the smaller animals of the woods, all I collected from the Old Oak was that they were, as might be anticipated, much more numerous than they are now. The weasel was the commonest of all, and would occasionally hunt in packs of five and seven ; but the stoat, or what we call the ermine weasel, was the bolder of the two, and would appear to have a certain power of fascination over the timid hare, which was

not used to flee from it as she did from a fox or a pack of hounds. Of the change in its coat he spoke as a well-known fact. Of the marten he was very fond, looking upon it as the most beautiful of the class; but to the fitchet weasel, known by the name of polecat or foumart, he had the greatest dislike, and could not abide that one should pass under his shade. The ground, he would add, was not free from its contaminating stench for a good twelve hours after. He likewise mentioned the curious fact—he had often heard it repeated by fishermen who sought rest under his boughs—that the fitchet was the cleverest adept at catching eels in the Rea, and on the friable banks of the Cruckton Brook. The reader of Bewick will not forget his clever figure of the fisher fitchet. The foumart, as it is called, is simply foul-marten, as distinguished from the sweet-marten. The disgusting odour of the foumart, 'produced by the exudation of a fetid secretion from a pouch or follicle under the tail, is even more intolerable than that of the common weasel or the stoat.' It should be added that the wild cat was formerly common enough, and the Old Oak added that there was no covenant of peace between that animal and the whole of the weasel tribe. The fox would appear to have been the same cunning depredator he is now.

In former days all the woods were full of squirrels, and to this little animal the Old Oak showed a great attachment. He was always welcome to his acorns when he could not get his favourite nuts, and he would watch him clear off every morsel of the dry brown inner skin from nut or acorn before he ate it. No creature is more delicate in feeding than this light-footed, beautiful creature. And I call to mind now, with regret, how we, as boys, used to hunt the elegant little creature, as it sprang from bough to bough, at Sundorne Castle. In after-days I read the squirrel hunt in Browne's 'Britannia's Pastorals,' and the reader who has never assisted at, or heard of, a squirrel hunt, may like to read it.

> Then as a nimble squirrel from the wood,
> Ranging the hedges for his filbert food,
> Sits partly on a bough his brown nuts cracking,
> And from the shell the sweet white kernel taking,
> Till (with their crookes and bags) a sort of boyes
> (To share with him) come with so great a noise,

That he is forced to leave a nut nigh broke,
And for his life leap to a neighbour oake,
Thence to a beech, thence to a row of ashes;
Whilst through the quagmires and red water plashes
The boyes run dabbeling thro' thicke and thin,
One teares his hose, another breaks his shin;
This, torn and tatter'd, hath with much adoe
Got by the bryers; and that hath lost his shoe;
This drops his band; that headlong falls for haste;
Another cryes behind for being last:
With sticks and stones, and many a sounding hollow,
The little fool with no small sport they follow,
Whilst he, from tree to tree, from spray to spray,
Gets to the wood, and hides him in his dray.

In closing the remarks which, at different times, I had heard my Talking Friend make on the wild animals of the locality within range of which he and his father dwelt, I may add that from their frequent reference to poisonous reptiles, and to the effects of poison, one might be led to suppose that adders, at least, were more numerous than they are now. 'Wyld wormes in wodes,' mentioned in 'The Vision of Piers Ploughman,' applied, no doubt, to serpents generally. The adder took its name from the A.-S. word for poison, *ættr*, still retained in the old Northern name for the spider, *ættercop*; and when, in latter days, the people under the Old Oak's shade spoke of the *Nædre* (i.e. the adder), they combined, in old Saxon phrase, the words for poison and serpent. Such, anyway, is my suspicion, and I have often heard the words interchanged. Then again, I think, they supposed many more 'creeping things' and flies to be poisonous than we do; the poor harmless toad we all know they called 'ugly and venomous,' though the very best of gardeners, destroying daily countless numbers of insects; and, under this supposition, I do not assent to the following passage in the Introductory Essay to the Anglo-Saxon Period of the 'Biographia Britannica Literaria.' The authority referred to is a Royal MS. in the Anglo-Saxon language, now in the British Museum, and treats of medicine: 'The numerous receipts against the bites of adders and other venomous reptiles, show that these latter were infinitely more numerous, and probably more various, than they are at present, and aid

us in conceiving the picture which our island then presented to the eye: thinly inhabited, and covered with marshes woods, and wilds.' We find also, in the work above mentioned, many receipts against the effects of poison; and (which appears singular enough) there are more provisions against the diseases of the eye than against any other complaint. To what follows I give a more willing assent, referring to what has been said on the subject of wells in a foregoing chapter: 'It is, perhaps, in some measure to the prevalence of this latter class of diseases in former times that we owe the preservation of the numerous superstitions connected with springs of water; and the peasantry in many parts of our island still use them, not on account of the purity of the water, but with a belief in some peculiar attributes of the well itself.'

As illustrative of the sort of men who lived amongst the woods and forests in earlier days, the reader, I think, will be much interested with a singular character who lived even as late as the times of James and Charles I. It is given by the amiable Gilpin in his 'Forest Scenery,' who quotes it from Hutchins's 'History of Dorsetshire.' There is a wild unmistakable freshness in the narrative:

'The name of this memorable sportsman, for in that character alone he was conspicuous, was Henry Hastings. He was second son to the Earl of Huntingdon, and inherited a good estate in Dorsetshire from his mother. He was one of the keepers of the New Forest, and resided in his lodge there during a part of every hunting season. But his principal residence was at Woodlands, in Dorsetshire, where he had a capital mansion. One of his nearest neighbours was Anthony Cooper, afterwards Earl of Shaftesbury. Two men could not be more opposite in their dispositions and pursuits. They seldom saw each other, and their occasional meetings were rendered still more disagreeable to both from their opposite sentiments in politics. Lord Shaftesbury, who was the younger man, was the survivor; and the following account of Mr. Hastings (which I have somewhat abridged) is said to have been the production of his pen.

'Mr. Hastings was low of stature, but strong and active, of

a ruddy complexion, with flaxen hair. His cloaths were always of green cloth. His house was of the old fashion, in the midst of a large park, well stocked with deer, rabbits, and fish ponds. He had a long narrow bowling green in it, and used to play with round sand bowls. Here, too, he had a banqueting room built, like a stand, in a large tree. He kept all sorts of hounds, that ran buck, fox, hare, otter, and badger, and had hawks of all kinds, both long and short winged. His great hall was commonly strewed with marrow bones, hounds, spaniels, and terriers. The upper end of it was hung with fox skins of this and the last year's killing. Here and there a pole-cat was intermixed, and hunters' poles in great abundance. The parlour was a large room, compleatly furnished in the same style. On a broad hearth, paved with brick, lay some of the choicest terriers, hounds, and spaniels. One or two of the great chairs had litters of cats in them, which were not to be disturbed. Of these, three or four always attended him at dinner, and a little white wand lay by his trencher to defend it if they were too troublesome. In the windows, which were very large, lay his arrows, cross-bows, and other accoutrements. The corners of the room were filled with his best hunting and hawking poles. His oyster table stood at the lower end of the room, which was in constant use twice a day, all the year round; for he never failed to eat oysters both at dinner and supper, with which the neighbouring town of Poole supplied him. At the upper end of the room stood a small table with a double desk, one side of which held a Church Bible, the other the "Book of Martyrs." On different tables in the room lay hawks' hoods, bells, old hats with their crowns thrust in, full of pheasants' eggs; tables, dice, cards, and store of tobacco pipes. At one end of this room was a door, which opened into a closet, where stood bottles of strong beer and wine, which never came out but in single glasses, which was the rule of the house, for he never exceeded himself, nor permitted others to exceed. Answering to this closet was a door into an old chapel, which had long been disused for devotion; but in the pulpit, as the safest place, was always to be found a cold chine of beef, a venison pasty, a gammon of bacon, a great apple-pye, with thick crust, well

baked. His table cost him not much, though it was good to eat at. His sports supplied all but beef and mutton; except on Fridays, when he had the best of fish. He never wanted a London pudding; and he always sang it in with "*My part lies therein-a.*" He drank a glass or two of wine at meals, put syrup of gilliflowers into his sack, and had always a tun glass of small beer standing by him, which he often stirred about with rosemary. He lived to be an hundred, and never lost his eyesight nor used spectacles. He got on horseback without help, and rode to the death of the stag till he was past fourscore.'

No wonder the Old Oak had such marvellous stories to tell, and that old Tredithic could recount histories which made all his leaves to shake, when characters like Henry Hastings lived in the times of the Stuarts. Perhaps one of the most graphic pages in the history of Henry II. is the account of the banqueting hall, and of the hawks pecking at his legs, to say nothing of the hounds which lay about, when the tables were moved, ready not only to snap up the fragments, but to hold their own with any guest who might wish to displace them. After all, there must have been something very exciting in these old days of *venerie*.

'T was merry in the hall,
When beards wagged all!

We have taken to the boards again—but does not the pole of extreme civilisation remind one now and then of the other extreme? Trench has, somewhere, an allusion to what is here hinted at, and, if I remember right, he calls these extremes 'the two poles of savage and falsely cultivated life.' Whenever matters arrive at this pitch, we may say with Sicinius in 'Coriolanus,' 'This is clean kam,' which Brutus readily interprets 'merely awry'—that is, quite, absolutely, and altogether crooked.

I had thus been thinking over modern days and ancient days, and was immersed entirely in what is called 'a brown study' (the Danes speak of a person under such circumstances as being '*i Taaget*,' i.e. in a fog), when the rustling of my Talking Friend's leaves again roused my dreamy attention,

and methought I heard him dwell eloquently on the advantages of civilisation; but it was only a sentence or two that I caught, for, finding me drowsy and inattentive, he left me, as most good teachers do for the time, to my own devices. The few remarks, however, which I caught, were no doubt very truthful ones:

'My aged father,' were his words, 'could well recollect when no one on the Rea, save the Priests of Pontesbury and Hanwood, and the religious of Minsterley, could either read or spell. Old Tredithic and one or two other wayfarers, who could do so, were looked upon as marvels. And I too,' continued my Talking Friend, 'notwithstanding the advantages we reaped from the scholars belonging to the Abbey at Shrewsbury, recollect right well that people of any book-learning were put down as dealers with what our young oaklings since the days of the Crusades have called Palmistry, or the Black Art. No wonder we continued to be ignorant as we were, and that the beasts of the field increased.'

More I might have heard, but weariness came over me and I slept.

Was I greatly surprised, not long after, to hear that the following dialogue had occurred on the confines of Lincoln and Yorkshire, not so far off from the Old Oak's locality? Perhaps not, for I had lived long, and had ascertained that even in the midst of the full glow of knowledge there would be darkness, even as there will be superstitions where a common observer supposes all to be light:

'Thomas, do you ever say your prayers?'
'Yes, I doas.'
'What prayer do you say, Thomas? The Lord's Prayer?'
'Noa, I doan't saay the Lord's Prayer.'
'What prayer then, Thomas, do you say?'
'I saas prayers.'
'Well, but what prayers?'
Why, I saas:

From witches and wuzzards,
From long-tailed buzzards,
And them things that creeps through other men's hedges,
Good Lord, deliver us!'

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LITTLE RIVER REA.

Sitting by a river's side,
Where a silent stream did glide
Muse I did of many things,
That the mind in quiet brings.
GREENE, *Philomela's Ode*, ii.. 38, Ed. Dyce.

Search the heads of the greatest river in the world, you shall find them but bubbles of water.—WEBSTER, *Duchess of Malfi*, i. 205, Dyce.

Si rivus tenuiter fluit, non est alvei culpa sed fontis.—ST. HIERON. *Epist.* xvii. ad Maram. i. 43, B.

Through the meadow lands clear rivers run,
Blue in the shadow, silver in the sun.
MRS. NORTON, *Lady of La Garaye.*

Est in aquâ dulci non invidiosa voluptas.
OVID, *Ex Pont.* II. vii. 73.

THE little stream of the Rea, which enters Shrewsbury at Coleham Bridge, under the name of the Mele Brook—or Meole, in modern spelling—has its source in Marton Pool, situate in the Domesday Hundred of Witentrea, partially represented by the modern Hundred of Cherbury, and within the parish of that name. The Manor of Marton, or *Mertune*, is assigned by 'Domesday' to the Shrewsbury Church of St. Chad; but after 'Domesday' Mr. Eyton remarks, 'We have not a trace of any seignory maintained by St. Chad's Church, at Marton. Like Alward's other manors it escheated to the Crown, and was annexed, probably by Henry I., to the Honour of Montgomery.' The elder male line of the De Bollars failing in the time of King John, it was again in escheat, and was permitted by the Crown to descend to Can-

telupe, the collateral heir of De Bollars, whose feeoffees were the Hanalds of Fredesley. This, however, is antiquarian and family lore, not wanted here. I may better quote the lines of Drayton—the Eighth Song of the 'Polyolbion':

> Mele, her great mistress next at Shrewsbury doth meet,
> To see with what a grace she that fair town doth greet;
> Into what sundry gyres her wondered self she throws,
> And oft inisles the shore, as wantonly she flows;
> Oft of it taking leave, oft turns, to it embrace;
> As though she only was enamoured of that place,
> Her fore-extended course determined to leave,
> And to that most loved town eternally to cleave;
> With much ado at length, yet bidding it adieu,
> Her journey towards the sea doth seriously pursue.

Leland, in his Itinerary, shows himself to have been a close observer:

'About halfe a mile ere I came to *Schrobbesbury*, I passed by a ford over *Mele* river, and there was a large narrowe bridge of tymbre over *Mele*, bearinge the name of the Brooke. And a mile above Mele Bridge there is another tymbre bridge over *Mele* called *Dagge Bridge*. There is a stone bridge of three arches over *Mele* as I entered into *Shrosbery* hard by the Abbey, and hard beneathe the bridge is the confluence of *Mele* and *Severne*.

'And here by this bridge breaketh out an arme of the Severne that at dead lowe waters in sommer scant fleeteth over the strand. There is a bridge of eight arches over this arme, and after that it passeth through this bridge it straight meeteth again with the great Severne.'

Such is old Leland's account of Shrewsbury, and in his own spelling, as near as it has come down to us. The only difference between his pronunciation and that of some modern Salopians is that they leave out the *hr*, calling the grand old town *Sews*bury, or even worse, *Sows*bury.

But this is beginning at the wrong end, and we must go back to the source of the Rea from Marton Pool. '*Nunc*,' as St. Jerome says, '*nobis per aliam semitam ad eundem locum perveniendum est, ne vidcamur præterita et abdita quondam calcare vestigia*.' For, as he says in another epistle, '*Unum iter, et perveniendi quo cupias multa compendia*.'

But perhaps it should be noted by the way that the name of the little brook about to be traced from its source in Marton Pool to the Severn—

(Defluit incerto lapidosus murmure rivus)—

is not a name derived from any particular place till it comes to Meole, and thence takes the name of Meole, or Meole Brook, but simply implies *water*, from the Anglo-Saxon *Eá*, and when aspirated *R'eá* or *Rea*. Without diving into the depths of etymology, one may see the word still in all such names as *Ey*ton, *Ea*ton-Constantine, *E*ton, and not improbably even in *Rea*ding. And I may venture to quote here what Mr. Eyton says with reference to the river of the same name which flows into the Teme, adding likewise (without assenting to) his note:

'It may safely be asserted as a general rule, that among our local and provincial names we shall find traces of the oldest language in the names of streams and rivers. It is further probable that the names of very many streams and rivers meant simple *stream* or *river* in the language to which they originally belonged. Thus the original meaning of the word Neen'—he is speaking of Neen, Richard's Nean, Neen Monel—'is said to be a stream; and accordingly we find two places in Shropshire so named to be situated upon streams. Besides this, we hear that the River Rea was occasionally called The Neen, and it is no wonder that the name was interchanged, for Rea itself means simply river.'

In the note referred to are the remarks following, which comprise a good deal of what is to be found in the 'Limbo of Etymology'—a very deep place!

'*Nan*, a brook, is one of the asserted names of a primitive language. Its derivatives, or cognates, are certainly found very widely. We have *Nen*, or *Nene*, still the name of a river in Northamptonshire. We have the Welsh *Nant*, signifying a brook; and perhaps the same root produced the Greek word *νάω* (to flow); whence *νᾶμα*, a stream. As to *Rhe* (or some such word, originally significant of a stream), we may trace it more widely than *Nan*. We have the Latin *Rivus* (a river), besides *Rhenus* (the Rhine), *Rhodanus* (the

Rhone), *Eridanus* (the Po), and *Rumon*, the old legendary name of the Tiber. We have also the Greek ῥέω (to flow), and the British *Rhin* (a river), all, probably, derived from the same primeval root.'

But to revert to Marton Pool—the little river's source. Situate in something of a wild district—very wild in my younger days—it has been the haunt of fisherman and sportsman from time immemorial. In the summer months parties used to be made for trolling, and within my recollection there were pike, and perch, and great roaches, and eels, in abundance. As the wind suited we used to throw off our trimmers, and it was a rare thing to return with an empty basket. Then again, about August, what a place were the reeds for flappers—such shooting as to delight the heart of the young sportsman, who had, however, to learn to allow for the rocking of the boat. But, above all places in this neighbourhood, it was the last haunt of the wild fowl that flew inland —now and then, but rarely, a swan or two showed themselves —but of wild geese there were constant flights, and William, old John Diggory's man, was sure to get his share. In the days I allude to, forty years past and more, the eastern side of the pool, before you came to any depth of water, might have suggested the lines in Endymion:

> The dreary melody of bedded reeds—
> In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds
> The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth.

There it was that old Fitzhugh plied his trade of boatsman with Will Wittlecomb as his helper, and told us how he was one of the poor members of the Powis family, though he had to earn his bread by the management of the oar. The old man was a character in those days, and I have often heard him tell his tale. Amongst others, the late Rev. C. Peters, Rector, at that time, of the Second Portion of Pontesbury, was very kind to him, and as I was his frequent companion, old Fitzhugh's communications were not lost on my boyhood. The largest pike I ever saw taken there weighed about seventeen pounds. It was an injured fish, having freed itself from a hook. The perch, latterly, were very small, but

occasionally some very large roach were taken by throwing out a net in the way of a surface shoal. Once I saw a very remarkable sight—a trimmer in the midst of the pool dashed off at what we should now call railroad speed; upon which old Fitzhugh at once shouted out that one of the biggest pike in the pool must have hooked itself. It turned out, however, to be a very large eel, and some difficulty we had in securing the creature. It is very well known that before thunder, and in very hot weather when there is thunder about, the eels will rise towards the surface. It is only at the fall of the leaf that their heads are turned downwards, as though making their way towards estuaries or the sea. Independent of other wild fowl, I must not omit to add that some of the last and largest *wisps of snipes* (the fen term) ever seen in these parts were seen on the marshy sides of Marton Pool. Till within a few years, there have remained a good many on different portions of the river Rea. Once or twice a northern diver is said to have been driven here by stress of weather.

A little to the north-by-west of Marton is the extensive parish of Worthen, which has been before mentioned, and which was withdrawn in 1236–7, by Thomas Corbet, from all connection with Chirbury Hundred. Ten years later he procured for it a charter of free warren. The little river, as it brawled hard by in its course, heard of many contentions in these early days, and to the Rea, in his start from Marton Pool, the name of Worthen was no mean one, but a sort of household word. It held its own with an obstinate perseverance, and no coroner might enter its limits; such was the lawlessness, at least, in Henry III.'s days, and much later—indeed, till the commencement of the present century. What is said of Laish in the Book of Judges might have been said of Worthen: '*There was no magistrate in the land that might put them to shame in anything: and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man.*' What one man has done there of late years will be remembered as well by the people as by his successors in the benefice. To have seen what he saw on his coming there and not to have

despaired showed a mind to the fore, and greatly did it turn to his credit, and to the credit of his college.

> Quod nihil in tanto rerum terrore locutus
> Indignum Latio.

Even the Rea seems to flow more softly by, making music over the pebbles, since the manners of the people are improved. At any rate there is a double pleasure in running back the little stream to its source, and in talking to the wayfarers on its banks, which, in spring, are not without their proper beauty. Miss Proctor's lines from 'The Golden Gate' seemed to make melody with the stream when last I wandered on its banks, and dwelt on 'Auld Lang Syne!'

> The faint, low echo that we hear of far-off music seems to fill
> The silent air with love and fear, and the world's clamours all
> grow still,
> Until the portals close again, and leave us toiling on in pain.

Still journeying on, the traveller will find his way to Minsterley, which has been mentioned before, and was probably, in days gone by, a spot much better known than it is at present, though the rail has reached it. But a chapel now, it once was probably a 'minster'—some Saxon and collegiate church, and not dependent upon Westbury, a parish, within my recollection, even more out of the way than Minsterley. But the age is an improving one, and the new church at Yockleton is a great gain. Speaking of Westbury Church, Mr. Eyton remarks: 'This church, existent before "Domesday," and even then collegiate, was, I have supposed, transferred from Minsterley. The two priests of Domesday were types of the two prebendaries or rectors, as sharing the emoluments of this church.' Westbury is out of the line of the Rea, but within my recollection it was the most desolate and neglected of all parishes—at least, according to my views. Children were baptised, and the women were churched, and the dead were buried out of sight; but between marriage and death there was very little church-going. A great satisfaction it is to an old man like myself, to think that the haunts of my boyhood are more cared for. I can see my child's garden at the Marsh still, and can well call to mind

the stately figure of the Old Squire of Whitton and his cork leg! But, bad as times were, it was something to have had a church within reach, though distant.

> So to the sacred Sun in Memnon's fane,
> Spontaneous concords greet the matin strain.

And though, like the stupidly avaricious fellow who killed the goose that laid the golden eggs, Cambyses sawed in two the statue of Memnon to discover its internal structure, yet, in its truncated form even, 'it was said for many centuries to have saluted the rising sun with cheerful tones, and the setting sun with melancholy ones.' So, too, is it with the Church's ministrations, and there was something refined and soothing to me, however melancholy, in these strains:

> Dimidio magicæ resonant ubi Memnone chordæ;

in the words of Akenside, as he afterwards corrected them, doing away with the delusion of the harp:

> For us old Memnon's image, long renown'd
> By fabling Nilus, to the quivering touch
> Of Titan's rays with each responsive string
> Consenting, sounded through the warbling air
> Unbidden strains.

So, too, amongst a people long unused to their nearer touch, will Church ministrations, once brought home again to their doors, make melody in their hearts.

But this is a digression from the Rea. And so, passing by Mailhurst, and the Lake, and Boycot; names and places with which we are not very much concerned, though within sight almost of the little stream, as Milton speaks,

> Through plain
> Soft ebbing;

the wayfarer will reach the ancient village and parish of Pontesbury. Threading my way there, as a boy, from Snail-beach on a hot summer's day, I put my hand upon the hollow top of a rotten gatepost, and as hastily withdrew it. Something cold either touched me or seemed to touch me, and on looking into the hole, I beheld an adder coiled up

and, as far as my recollection serves me, asleep. Once in after-life, as I have mentioned in my 'Parochial Antiquities,' I came as suddenly upon an adder. It was in turning over one of the mullions of Heene Chapel.

Years have rolled by since the old church at Pontesbury was pulled down and the present fabric erected, but full well do I recollect the excitement which it caused. 'Everybody that passed by,' said my Talking Friend, 'would be speaking of it. It was to be of stone, and of the best, and I could not but call to mind how my venerable father would tell of the wooden churches of early Saxon times—such as the original church of the abbey at Shrewsbury, which was in all men's mouths in this district, no less than that of Canterbury, I suppose, was in the mouths of the men of Kent; for it, too, I often heard the priest of Hanwood say, was of wood.'

Beneath the church and the site of the houses of two of the portions of Pontesbury, the little river Rea, when the weather is fine, brawls over the gravels. Something has been said of the parish before—called in 'Domesday' *Pan*tesberie, which reminds one of *Pan*son, in the adjoining parish of Hanwood. In the 'Saxon Chronicle,' alluded to likewise before, it is called POSSENTES-BYRIG, the Latin portion of which word was evidently not understood by the Saxon scribe. It has been surmised that a family of the name of *Pontas* or *Pantas* was the origin of the nomenclature, but there is no historical authority for the conjecture that I am aware of, though the name of Pantin is an old Shropshire name. The remnant of the castle is in a garden on the right hand side, as you leave Pontesbury for Pontesford, but hardly anything remains to tell what it was. As giving name to the deanery in which it is situated, Pontesbury has always been a place of some note and standing. Within these last fifty years a mixed multitude has settled in its vicinity, which will command all the supervision the clergy of the three several portions can give to their necessities—bodily, moral, or religious. The three portions are known as—(1) the Decanal, or David Portion; (2) Nicholas, or Child's Hall Portion; (3) Cold Hull, or Ratford Portion. In the strictest sense of the word Pontesbury was not collegiate. The sense

in which St. George's, at Pontesbury, might be called collegiate may be seen in Mr. Eyton's account of the parish.

Meanwhile, as I was thinking over the many kindnesses I had received as a boy under the roof-tree of Pontesbury's second portion, my Talking Friend called to my recollection the fact that, under circumstances, the little river Rea, or the Habberley Brook which joins it at Pontesford, or even streamlets as small as those of the Oaks and the Clanbrook, could become what Milton calls 'horned floods.' He alluded to the inundation of 1811, which I well and fully recollect, as I have stated in the note to Southey's 'Commonplace Books.' Many were drowned close to Pontesford, amongst others a Mrs. Heighway, well known in the neighbourhood. She had taken refuge on the roof of a house which gave way. A compendious account is given under 'Miscellaneous Transactions,' in the 'History of Shrewsbury,' which may be transcribed here as appertaining to the course of the Rea.

'1811. May.—The western side of the island, from Somersetshire, through the counties of Gloucester, Worcester, and Hereford, as far as Shropshire, was visited by most extraordinary storms of thunder, lightning, and rain. The greatest portion of its fury in this county exploded on the north-western declivities of the Stiperstones Mountain, where the rivulets which feed the Rea or Meole Brook take their rise. It cannot be doubted that a waterspout burst, a little to the south of the White Grit Mines, between seven and eight o'clock in the evening of Monday, the 27th of the month; in consequence of which the streams which run by Minsterley and Pontesford poured such a prodigious quantity of water into Meole Brook, that when it entered the Severn under Coleham Bridge it actually forced the current of the river backward towards its source, and realised one image on which poets are fond of dwelling as the characteristic of impossibility. The devastation committed on the banks of these streams, through which the torrent rushed, are more easily conceived than described. Houses, bridges, mills, trees, hedges, cattle, all fell a prey to its fury; and not fewer than sixteen or seventeen persons were said to have perished at Minsterley and Pontesford.'

'Well enough,' said my Talking Friend, 'should you recollect the inundation, for although you were at your grandfather's, Colonel Wood's, at Hanwood—whose fierce Indian temperament there was water enough to cool—yet, when you returned home again in a few days' time, you might recall the rough work indoors.' The flood, in fact, had passed through the lower parts of the house, doors and windows being thrown open. The wall which flanked the garden on one side gave way before it, so that, happily, the water was not pounded up. Had it been so, the house might have gone with the rush. A little before it came to the worst, in came good old Cross, the miller, his countenance as pale as a sheet (which was not its usual colour) and exclaimed, 'Sir! sir! the deluge is coming—the world's at an end—all the cattle are coming tumbling and bellowing before it!' And, sure enough, so it was. The cattle, which were used to be folded at Meole, rushed downwards from the Lea (to be mentioned by and by) towards their old haunts, and one, when the waters subsided, was found fixed in the fork of a pear-tree, four or five feet from the ground. Happily, most were saved, as were a large drove of pigs, who always seem very much on the alert when stormy weather is about. I may add, from a hint thrown out by my Talking Friend, that an eel and some small fish were found on the kitchen floor, and that when the women came to clean the house there were three inches of mud in it! The miller of those days, good old Charles Cross, was greatly attached to the 'LAST OF THE OLD SQUIRES,' who lived in these parts; and he often used to say, with much thankfulness, because his mill was spared, 'The old proverb's true, "As good water goeth by the mill as driveth it!" But that awful evening, unless One had sat above the water-flood, and stilled the madness of it, we had all of us been destroyed without any peradventure.'

A notable race were these old millers on the Rea—not always sober, not devout, but not irreligious, though sometimes, in unguarded moments, trenching on the profane. Kind they were to the poor, and willing to trust them when flour was dear. And amongst these notables two more

notable never lived than Charles Cross, and William Pickering, whose stentorian voice could be heard even when the flood was at its highest. The inundation sobered them both for the time. One could not wish this race of men to appear again, but all the same, in a rough sort, they did good, and the poor had seldom any ill to speak of them. And I don't know but that they filled their place as well as

> One, when he well examined, and made looke,
> His name in his own parish and church booke,
> Could hardly prove his Christendome !

But, passing by Pontesford, or, as it is locally called, Ponsert, and its lead furnaces and tall smelting chimneys, the course of the Rea will lead us to the NEW MILLS, as the name implies—not the mill of 'Domesday Book' which rendered its annual corn-rent. It is not, however, at all improbable but that the new mills may be upon the old site ; I should not at all wonder if they were. Here, too, for years lived a miller of the old school ; and even yet, if report be square with him, there lives one not far off who never took temperance pledge, and has been heard to say, when the tap ran fresh, 'I'll live well, if I die poor!' There is a recklessness in such speeches, but the bite of the men who make them is not so bad as their bark. Ale, good ale, from time immemorial, would seem to have been the miller's favourite. The host in the 'Canterbury Tales' saw at once that the miller was 'drunken of ale,' and would have stopped him, but, like stentorian Pickering on the Rea Brook and of the Cruckton Mill—just where the two little streams join—he was none so easily stopped, or, to use the miller of the Cruckton Brook's phrase, 'cogged i' the mouth.' And he said, with the full determination to proceed with his story :

> Now herkeneth, quod the miller, all and some :
> But first I make a protestation
> That I am drunk ; I know it by my sonn ;
> And therefore if that I misspake or say,
> Write it the ale of Southwerk, I you pray.

It may be added here—calling to mind, as I do, the great big, burly men of my childhood, the millers of those days—

that Chaucer, in his 'General Prologue,' perhaps describing the class, makes his miller to be one of this sort:

> The miller was a stout carl for the nones,
> Full bigge he was of brawn, and eke of bones;
> That proved wel, for over all ther he came,
> At wrestling he would bear away the ram.
> He was short-shouldered, brode, a thickke gnarre,
> Ther n'er no dore that he n'olde hede of barre,
> Or brake it at a rearing with his hede.

Meanwhile the little stream flows on, and many a pike basks in the miller's dam, and many an eel is caught in his weels or putcheons—local names for eel-traps and eel-pots, made of wicker-work, and much used here and on the Severn. But it is in what are called the 'pounds,' for damming up the miller's water, that they are usually set, in the Rea, or at the 'bolts,' which relieve the water from the pounds. It is to the shallows only that Milton's words, 'every stone of lustre from the brook,' will apply; and with these no brook abounds so much as this little stream, adding so greatly to its beauty and to its music. Many years ago I heard the most expert fisherman on its banks say, 'There was no music like that of water running over the shallows on a summer's evening!' And I bethought me of an old seaside rhymer's lines:

> I 'd rather stand upon the shore,
> And hear old Ocean's roar,
> Than listen to the deftest lay
> The fairest maiden knew to play;

a Dirk Hatteraick in his way, and not brought up

> Amid the groves
> Of willows, bending low their downy heads;

but used to hardship, rather, from his youth up—for he had visited Spitzbergen and the Polar regions, and Hudson's Bay and Davis' Straits—he had still a like love for the harmony of Nature, and rough as he was—his old pea-jacket was not rougher—his mind was attuned to the softest cadences.

Richard Pendrell told Charles II. that the stream they had come to 'was a scurvy river, not easy to be passed in all places, and that he could not swim.' So the king helped him over. This was just the case with the pounds on the

Rea—they are deep and dangerous, and those who would get over safely must look for bridge or ford. The quantity of eels contained in these pounds formerly was astonishing, and calls to my mind a passage in Sharon Turner's 'History of the Anglo-Saxons,' which was quite corroborated by the information given me by my Talking Friend on various occasions:

'They ate,' says the historian, 'various kinds of fish; but of this description of their animal food the species which is most profusely noticed is the eel. They used eels as abundantly as swine. Two grants are mentioned, each yielding one thousand eels, and by another two thousand were received as an annual rent. Four thousand eels were a present yearly from the monks of Ramsey to those of Peterborough. We read of two places purchased for twenty-one pounds, wherein sixteen thousand of these fish were caught every year; and in one charter twenty fishermen are stated, who furnished, during the same period, sixty thousand eels to the monastery. Eel dikes are often mentioned in the boundaries of their lands.'

In former days many of these boundaries might have been observed, in the course of the Rea, which bore the names severally of dikes and balks. And besides this, the lands of different owners were marked off by large stones. These stones were, in later days, called *mere*, or *boundary stones*, and they had a sort of sacredness attached to them. What more severe than that remark made upon the ungodly in the Book of Job, '*Some remove the landmarks*'? for had it not been commanded, saying, '*Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark*'? And thus, throughout the land, these old stones, in many places, still remain as time-honoured memorials. Only look at that turn the Rea takes, and observe that old stone just before. After having left the New Mills, we reach Hinton.

> How silent comes the water round that bend;
> Not the minutest whisper did it send
> To the o'erhanging sallows.

Many a tale, I dare say, could that old stone unfold, if it had only a voice. To say nothing of Archbishop Honorius'

division of parishes in A.D. 650, from Edgar's days (A D. 970) downward, the stone boundary was a well known division. One of the prettiest passages in the 'Fasti' of Ovid is his description of the god Terminus:

> Termine, sive lapis, sive es defossus in agro
> Stipes, ab antiquis, sic quoque numen habes.
> . . . . . .
> Et, seu vomeribus, seu tu pulsabere rastris,
> Clamato, 'Meus est hic ager, ille tuus.'

Passing on from Hinton, adjoining to the old hamlet of Edge, one of the old Domesday Berewicks of Ford, or Egge, as sometimes written (e.g. in a manorial inquest, 1255, and at the assizes in 1256), the little stream still hastens on towards Halston, and then to another of the old Domesday Berewicks called Lee, or the Lea, near to the Lea Cross, which has been mentioned before in connection with the lead mines and the old occupancy of the Romans.

Ergand and Elfrid, with whom the venerable oak, my Talking Friend's father, was well acquainted, lived at the Lea, and by occupation they were saffron-gatherers; on which I may note, in passing, that here, even yet, in the field adjoining the Lea Bridge, through which the footpath runs, the *Colchicum autumnale* grows in wild luxuriance, and for its beauty and its elegance was the delight of my childhood. The pasture in which it grows is a cow-pasture, and, I suppose, in grazing the animals contrive to avoid it. Though it does not necessarily follow that what is poisonous, or, at least, an *eau médicinale* to gouty subjects, should be such to them; for, as Lucretius says, beforehand with our English proverb:

> Quod aliis cibus est, aliis fuat acre venenum.

Having mentioned the Lea Bridge, it may be added that there was always a bridge there, just above the ford—not like the present one, which is the most picturesque bridge in the neighbourhood, but one hollowed out of trees, such as those nowadays in Ladák and Tartary. 'In my boyhood,' said old John Diggory, whose epitaph in Pontesbury Churchyard has been given before, 'there was always to be found an old trout under the side arch of the Lea Bridge, which he

kept to himself, as two old crows will keep a field. When he was caught another took his place, and it was always noted that the one side of the nose was flattened by the stone-work;' a curious remark, which will call to the scholar's mind what Herodotus says of the fishes of the Nile: 'When any of this sort of fish are taken on their passage to the sea, they are found to have the left side of the head scarred and bruised; while, if taken on their return, the marks appear on the right. The reason is, that, as they swim down the Nile seaward, they keep close to the bank of the river upon their left, and, returning again up the stream, they still cling to the same side, hugging it and brushing against it constantly, to be sure that they miss not their road through the great force of the current.' Something of this sort used to be said of the salmon at Dunkeld Bridge, but it is accounted for by natural causes. In fact, the male and female salmon assist in burying the roe in the gravels, but it is the male who is so assiduous as, in so doing, not only to harden, but even to turn up his snout.

But the mention of the meadow saffron and of the bridge at the Lea has led us away from Ergand and Elfrid, 'whose names,' said the Old Oak, 'were very familiar in the district, as were those of their two daughters, who were sought after by all the country round: their names were Hera and Henda. The former—gentle, tender-hearted, and lovable—was betrothed to what we might now call a yeoman of Condover; but she died young, and he followed her to her grave at Pontesbury. 'And as I heard the people talk of his loss,' said the Old Oak, 'as they sat and rested themselves under the shadow of my branches, methought they had all wet cheeks—wet as my leaves when bedashed with rain. In all my time I never recollect anyone lamented more.'

'Henda, the younger,' continued my Talking Friend, 'as my father used to say, was quite a different character, though not unlovable. She was tall, buxom, and handsome, and became allied to one of the Norman invaders, who spoke lightly of the Romans and their remains in the vicinity of the Lea Cross—for there was a cross there from very early days, still pointing to the introduction of Christianity.

'The history,' he would add, 'runs into later days, but it is one I have often heard recounted; for old stories and old superstitions abide long in country places.' And I bethought me, as in a parenthesis, how the Greek trader still has a golden fleece on his prow, in memory of the Argonautic expedition.

'At the first all seemed well, and even the haughty Norman appeared to be contented and at rest with his bonny, bonny bride—at all events, they lived as a contented pair, possessed of a cottage, a hearth, and a garden. But, within a while, the saffron-gatherer's daughter seemed to imbibe the notions that warmed the Norman's blood, and there was an unrest settling down upon them both. The chase, which, for a while, was occupation enough for Rudolf (such was the name of Henda's lord and master), grew wearisome to him, and, although he knew how to catch the best fish in the stream, and the pair had enough for all their wants, and more, it was clear that a restless spirit could rest no longer in a spot so quiet; and, as report went, he thus broke his resolution to the not unwilling ears of the handsome Henda.

'"Saffron bread, and warden pies, and simnels," he would say, with flashing eyes, "were well enough for the Saxon *ceorl*, but, for his part, he could live no more by the brook-side, and by the edge of the tangled forest." And Henda, Saxon Henda, had listened to his account of war and warriors so long that she was ready to leave the home of her childhood, and the music of the Rea, as it laughed over the pebbles, and the bright saffron flowers, and to follow the fortunes of her lord.

'Nor was it long before their minds were made up. And thus it fell out. Rudolf had been at Shrewsbury, or, as then called, Scrobbesbyrig, where he met with some of his old comrades, the followers of Roger de Montgomery. As soldiers will, they had spent the night together, and, amid wine and wassail, their talk had been of that wonderful sight in the heavens of falling stars, which one of their fellow-soldiers, Malvoisin, had seen a few nights ago, from which they augured that they should rest no more, in inglorious ease, by the banks of the Severn, whose fish they were sick of, and that war and battle were not far off.

'In the meanwhile, as your "Saxon Chronicle" says, and which a priest of Hanwood, in after years, referred to, it became known to the king that the Welshmen in Wales had demolished a castle called Montgomery and slain Earl Hugh's men, who had to hold it; and he therefore commanded a second army to be suddenly levied, and after St. Michael's Mass went into Wales, and distributed his force, and penetrated all the land, so that the force all came together on All Hallows' (November 1) at Snowdon. But the Welsh went constantly before into mountains and moors, so that it was impossible to come at them. And the king then turned homewards, because he saw that he could not do more there that winter. "This," said the priest of Hanwood referred to —he was a very clerkly man, my aged father told me—"gave us a date, for it is written down, and in *old* Saxon, though not the *oldest*, under the year MXCV."

'In this expedition into Wales, unsuccessful as it was, Rudolf made himself conspicuous, and in a wolf-hunt on Snowdon—which then abounded with those savage creatures, as you would infer from the legend of Bethgellert—was of service to the king, who, when the gaunt monster's fangs were clear of his hose, and the sleuth-hounds had him in their teeth, inquired, in his bold, rough tongue—for rough enough it was, though courtly Norman—"Who he might be, and whence he came?"

'He replied, no ways daunted, "that, although he had lived for a time in seclusion with his Saxon bride, and in an out-of-the-way country spot, and by a river's side—than which, he admitted, the land could show few prettier—he and his Henda were ready to serve in the wars afresh; he as a warrior, she as his faithful and trusty companion."

'"And where may the lady be?" inquired the king, in somewhat softer tones, for he could speak softly when he chose, red Rufus as he was.

'"In her bower," was Rudolf's reply, "and not far off."

'And so the king bade him go fetch her, and ordered Rudolf to join his body-guard, merely adding that "he hoped she would not have to repent of the rough life she had chosen, for he liked the Saxon maiden well."

'It was early in the year A.D. 1096 that he joined the king's guard—that same year, as the priest of Hanwood of later date informed my aged father, when, "at St. Michael's Mass, the IVth of the Nones of October (October 4), there appeared an extraordinary star, shining in the evening, and soon going to its setting. It was seen in the south-west, and the ray that stood from it seemed very long, shining south-east; and almost all the week it appeared in this wise. Many men supposed that it was a comet." So said the clerkly man, having gathered his authority from an old MS. in his possession.

'It does not appear that Rudolf accompanied William II. to the hunt in the New Forest, where he lost his life from an arrow of Sir Walter Tyrrel's, whether shot purposely or not; but, for many years after the death of Rufus, Rudolf was, in some way or another, attached to the interests of the Norman kings: and he spoke of the Tower of London and of Westminster Hall as great works when he could say nothing else in favour of his red master and lord departed. For several years—an interval of a year now and then excepted—the two were in the habit of visiting the Lea and the old people, the saffron-gatherers from the Rea side. At last these good old Saxons died, and then Henda, to whom Rudolf was deeply attached, and who never left him, was seen no more in her native land. It was conjectured that she followed her lord in the wars in Normandy and elsewhere—but, whether or not, after this time the holly chaplet was seen no more at Yuletide on Hera's grave at Pontesbury, or, as then called, Possentesbyrig. The lover that was used to place it there, or to see that it was so placed, was no more found within reach either of Pontesford Hill or of the Lea Bridge.

'Many years after—it was towards the end of the reign of Henry II.—there came over from Paris, with those that announced the death of Henry's third son—"the astute, contriving, eloquent, and hypocritical" Geoffrey (as I once heard you call him beneath my old, withered trunk, and not very long ago), who was killed there under the horse's feet at a tournament—a dark-eyed, long-haired youth, who was much in favour about the Court, and could speak to the king when,

in that fierce and angry, demoniacal mood which belonged to his race, few dare accost him. On one of these occasions, when the old king, who had been occupied with his hawks and his dogs, as was his wont in his hours of relaxation, even to the last, was in a pleasanter mood, the young soldier, with the freedom conceded to him, shouted out from below the salt—

'"A boon, O king! A boon, sire!"

'"S'blood and z'ounds," roared the king, "what can the petted varlet want which we have not indulged his humour in?"

'The reply was that he wished to visit a midland district—county you would call it—named *Scrobbesbyrigscire*, whose people, he understood, were *the Scrobsæte*, and under the lordship of the Montgomerys, as chief lords. He knew not where it was—"How should I, but a youth and a stripling, O king?—but Rudolf de Lea" (Lee or Leigh?) "has a tongue in his mouth, and with that and his sword's point no Norman need doubt about finding his way in an island like Angleland."

'"But what can the child want there?" said the king, with some curiosity.

'"Sire," replied the youth—and as he fell upon his knees and did homage the dark eyes glistened, and there was a fringe of watery light on the long eyelashes—"on the death of my honoured father, who served your predecessors well, he bade me visit, if I ever came to Angleland again, the spot from whence his father married his Saxon wife, who was the truest and best of women, and the glory of her sex. 'Such a mother,' he impressed upon me, 'never was!' but she always added, when he blessed her for her love to him, 'You should have known my sister Hera by the Rea side!' The names, sire, humble and trivial as they may seem, are impressed upon my heart, and I should like to visit the place of her nativity. Always unwilling to leave her husband's side, who was bold even to rashness, she died before him, and was buried in France; but she spoke of green fields and running waters to the last, as the dying will, and the names Hanewode, Possentesbyrig, Hinton, and the Lea, still lingered on

her tongue: and it is from the latter spot, wherever in the world it may be, that I draw my name. It was the pleasure of my father's latter days to call me

'RUDOLF DE LEA.'"

'"By the bones of the martyred Becket," exclaimed the king, "and thou shalt visit the spot, and I will cause letters to be written to my castellan and sheriff of Scrobesbury to help thee on thy way. And it's best I should do so, for many years ago, on my progress through those parts, and when I wrested Brugg (i.e. your modern Bridgenorth) and its castle from the hands of Hugh de Mortimer, I found the land full of rivers and scrub; and how you should be able to find your way there without such aid surpasses my cunning." And so the king had letters written in his name, and signed with his seal, and young Rudolf de Rea set forth on his long and perilous journey.

How he got to Shrewsbury, as we now call it, my Talking Friend said his father, the Old Oak, did not know; but get there he did, and was referred by the castellan and sheriff, with much courtesy—as might be expected on the receipt of the king's letters—to the abbot that was in those days, and who, strangely enough, bore the same Christian name as the young soldier, having been sent there from Canterbury, of which city he was a monk, on the deposition of his predecessor, Adam, abbot of Shrewsbury, in the year 1175.

'It so chanced that the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury were well known to our Ralph of good memory, abbot of Salop, and not unfrequently, when they came to the town, brought to the abbey small offerings of fish or game. When, therefore, the soldier stripling was asked into the abbot's parlour, and had made known his mission modestly and in a few words, at which the abbot was much struck, as it was not the way of soldiers generally at that time, and took to him immediately; he cut the conference short by saying, "The Mele, or Meole, Brook which enters our town at Coleham, close by, is only the river Rea by another name—as Ordericus testifieth, when he tells us of its falling into the Severn here—and we will soon find out for thee, good youth, both the Lea

and the Lea Bridge, the saffron-gatherers and the saffron-field thou harpest on so feelingly. Meanwhile, get thee to the refectory, and partake of our humble cheer. Who knows but thou mayest have a trout, or a pike, or an eel-powt out of the very brook thou art in search of? for in our abbey there's plenty of store from those parts as well as from the Severn. No stream hereabouts has finer speckled trout than the Rea, so full as it is of minnows, and so abundant in the May-fly." And so they parted for the present.'

There was a pleasant and refreshing shake of his leaves when my Talking Friend arrived at this point of his story; and he whispered, as it were, 'Who should know the Abbey Pool, which still remains, better than you and your brothers? It was the haunt of your younger days, and the friends of your youth lived there.' And his words called up solemn thoughts as I considered how many were gone—

Sucked up from time into eternity!

But to proceed with our story as the Old Oak told it.

'It happened that very afternoon that the priest of Hanwood came to Shrewsbury, having some questions to ask about St. Michael's Chapel, which, in after years, was the cause of much dispute, commissioned so to do by his friend the priest of Pontesbury, who was invalided, and could not leave his home.

'"*In tempore venis!*" quoth the abbot on the entrance of the priest of Hanwood. "There's a stripling here—a gentle youth though a soldier—just arrived with letters from the king to the castellan and sheriff, who has passed him on to me for information. Sooth to say, those borrel laymen know but little; though on this point I know not how the warder should know much. The truth is, he is in search of details which none can give—no, not your friend the priest of Pontesbury—so well as thou canst; for he is young, and thou art old, and knowest, like some faithful chronicler (our brother Wilhelm, you know, of the Scriptorium, always refers to you about his MSS. and his illuminated letters), all the histories of the neighbourhood. No disrespect—we love him well—to our mutual friend, who is still in search of the silver

arrow by Ponsert Hill side, which he will never find, methinks."

'That same afternoon the soldier youth was introduced to the priest of Hanwood, who took to him at first sight as much as the abbot had done. Well pleased was the abbot, no doubt, to serve the king, with an eye to his temporalities —and these Norman kings exacted much service—but, let the truth be told, Ralph of good memory was sufficiently pleased to be of use to this long-haired youth, with his bright eyes and *débonnaire* appointment. And he sighed and said within himself, "Had my sister Idonea's son lived, he might, peradventure, have grown up to be such a youth as this."

'The priest of Hanwood was about to return that evening, but he was easily persuaded to remain where he was, and was very much surprised to find the soldier style himself Rudolf de Rea. But the names were to him household words. Who by the Lea Bridge had not heard of Ergand and Elfrid, the saffron-gatherers; of Hera, the early called; and of Henda and her proud Norman lord? All, however, that was said over-night was, that the stranger wished to visit the Lea and the old churchyard of Pontesbury.

'In the morning they left in good time, both supplied with palfries from the abbey, and speeded with the abbot's *Benedicite.*

'In those days travelling was not so easy an affair as it is now, and long before they reached the priest's humble cell at Hanwood—it was on the slope by the brook where your wood now stands—he had picked out all that appertained to the soldier, who spoke indifferent Saxon, as well as Norman-French, and knew his history better than he knew it himself. Curiously enough,' continued my Talking Friend, throwing a sort of pride, methought, into the very rustling of his sun-browned leaves, 'Rudolf de Rea had been taught the Saxon tongue as his mother's tongue; and, though he mixed it up with much Norman-French and scraps of Latin when at fault, it was perfectly intelligible to the priest of Hanwood, who was a well-informed man, and, like others of his day, had to converse frequently in the same language: it was his

simplicity and general information which had recommended him to the abbot of Shrewsbury. The "RELIGIOUS," indeed, as they were afterwards called, did not deserve the name of "*Clerks*," or, as you would speak, "*Clerici*," unless they could read Latin and converse in Anglo-Saxon and Norman-French. As you very well know, never was greater mistake made than in calling *all* the priesthood of those ages ignorant. They kept the lamp of knowledge burning in the Dark Ages, as times of comparative ignorance have been complacently called in modern days.

'Arrived at Hanwood, they rested there that afternoon, for the Norman soldier took a vast fancy to the place, as well as to his companion the priest, who, as recorded above, had done the same by him. Looking down upon the spot from a little on this side the modern Edgebolt, from which the saddle of Ponsert Hill was clearly visible, the soldier had exclaimed, "Of all places in my travels—and they have been far and wide—this, the one of all others, I should call 'THE HAPPY VALLEY!'"

'On the morning following the priest proposed taking Rudolf to Pontesbury, for he thought it right and proper to break the matter to his brother Gilbert, the priest of Pontesbury, before he took the soldier to the Lea. "There was much courtesy," my father, the Old Oak, said, "in those days, and the clergy in this part of the country were not only well bred, but well born also."

'Gilbert, priest of Pontesbury, was, as I said before, sickly—even more—and Clement, the priest of Hanwood, visited him constantly. On the present occasion the sick man was sunning himself on the knoll where his small dwelling stood, close by the church, above the brook, and much pleased was he to see Clement coming. "But who," said he to himself, "hath he got with him? No one of our orders—that's clear—but a soldier, by his bearing; and, i' faith, the youth is one to arrest even a sick man's attention."

'On arriving at the small oaken porch, the priest of Pontesbury greeted his friend warmly, and said how good it was of him, in all weathers, winter or summer, to visit the sick man's house, bowing at the same time courteously to

the soldier, whom Clement introduced as Rudolf de Rea, adding thoughtfully, "Old in wisdom and in goodness, Gilbert, thou art but young at thy post, and I am old in years, and the name is familiar to me as the rippling of the brook over its gravelly shallows. Indeed, I have more than once mentioned it to you in connection with a grave in the churchyard —the grave of Hera, Ergand and Elfrid, the saffron-gatherers' daughter." And Clement bowed again, and ushered them in, "brushing off," as my father heard tell beneath his shade, "something like a tear;" for he had cause to think much of death, and the grave, and the churchyard.

'Having partaken of the hospitalities of the priest's frugal board—such as they were—Clement told the young man's story to his sick brother. Upon hearing it, Gilbert was greatly moved, and expressed himself much grieved that he could not join them in their visit to the Lea. "But," said he, "I can accompany you to the grave; and I promise you, soldier, it shall be lovingly and tenderly watched as long as my poor life lasts, and Christmas and St. John's Night shall never find it without its holly wreath and flower krantz; and when the autumn comes, and the blossom points to the bulb, the meadow saffron shall be planted by its side. Fare thee well, young man, and remember me in your prayers; for, as this my sickness is probably unto death, I need them much."

'Clement clearly saw that his friend was worse, and unable to bear anything that deeply affected him; so he departed at once, noting mentally what a grasp of the hand the soldier gave his brother at parting. He often told the good people of the Lea, in after days, that the soldier wept; adding—for he was a man of reverent thought and great Scripture knowledge—"I can have no doubt he was a good soldier of Jesus Christ, though such a sort of people generally are more ready to die in battle than prepared to die well."

'The walk to the Lea, and its ancient bridge—hard by which there was a *calcetum*, or old Roman causeway—and to the saffron-field adjoining, was accomplished more readily than might have been anticipated, there being a Roman pathway from hence to the Lea Mines. Vastly gratified was the

Norman soldier with all he saw, though he never ceased to lament that, being summer time, he could not see the crocuses in their glory and their beauty.

'As regarded his family there, it turned out as the priest of Hanwood had informed him. Old Ergand and Elfrid were the last of their race, and there was none remaining. A very distant connection only was known to be in existence, called Hereward, who dwelt at Pulverbatch; and to him the soldier sent a gratuity, through the priest that was there in those days, who, like Gilbert, was a friend of Clement's—the general favourite of the neighbourhood.

'That day, in company with the priest of Hanwood, and another by himself, was spent in the old haunts of his forefathers; and it was remarked in after years that he must have gone from house to house, for many old people retained, as memorials, some curious gold pieces, such as had never been seen in this part of the country before. At different times some of them had been shown to Clement. Most of them were French, a few English, and, as he well recollected, a rare bezant or two, like those the Varangians circulated.

'Such was the little story of Rudolf de Rea,' said my Talking Friend, 'of which my venerable father was so fond;' and he added that 'in after years some mixed gold coins had been found buried by his roots.' Had the priest of Hanwood deposited them there in troublous times, or had some old inhabitant of the Lea thought it a fitting place whereby to lay up his heirloom?

'For many years afterwards there was a constant intercourse kept up with Rudolf de Lea and the priest of Hanwood, who reported to him the early death of Gilbert, adding simply, "*The good die young; the aged, like myself, are spared to repent!*" The means of communication were through the abbot of Shrewsbury, for the time being, to whom, as well as to Clement, the soldier sent periodically some curious MSS., doubly valuable in those days, when printing was unknown.

'When Gilbert of Pontesbury died the holly wreath and flower krantz were still placed on Hera's grave by Clement; and it was noted that that grave was the only one around

which the meadow saffron grew. Gilbert, no doubt, had planted the bulbs there, and perhaps had watered them with his tears. At all events, his attachment to the soldier's memory was like a story of old romance.

'It was some fifteen or twenty years, more or less, after these occurrences that all communication ceased, and Clement had great misgivings about Rudolf, who had returned to the wars in France. One day he was summoned by the abbot to Shrewsbury—whether Ralph III., or William of Langton, or Walter of Leominster, my venerable father had forgotten—and as his visits to the abbey were always pleasant ones, even to the last, his staff was presently in his hand and his loins well girt for the walk by the forest of Lythwood; for even so early as this the abbey had some rights of wood there, and the foresters were Clement's friends and protectors always, and it was a pleasure to him to see them when he might.

'Welcome was Clement, as he always was, at the abbey, but his journey home was a sorrowful one. Indeed, he knew at once by the abbot's face—a kindly one, even when dashed with trouble—that he had some sad tidings for his ear. And in truth he had; for, in handing him over a cunningly wrought silver filigree case, with a thick antique gold ring in it, he said, not without tears:

'"'A palmer from the Holy Land brought this to me, with strict injunctions that I should deliver it into no one's hand but yours. All he could tell me was, that a wounded soldier at Ascalon, after Richard's defeat of Saladin there, 'on finding I was going to England, delivered it into my hands—his martial bearing was grand as he crossed his forehead—merely adding, "As your connections are at Haughman or at Alba Casa, near Scrobbesbyrig, find out the abbot there, tell him that in battle I never forgot the God of battles, and ask him, as a dying man's request, to deliver this over to Clement de Hanewode."'"

'Such were the palmer's words, and such were the abbot's, from whom, for the first time in his life, the priest of Hanwood parted in sorrow. On opening the filigree case, and on examining the ring, there was found on it, in large letters of

the time, scratched rather than engraved, and with the cross on either side—

† Rudolf de Lea. †

Such was the simple record of the saffron-gatherers of the Rea.'

The reader who may now visit the spot, following the course of the little stream, will find it brawling over shallows, for a mile or more, till it makes a bend under some cottages and a knoll planted with firs and larches. Near the stream, all the way, is a footpath; and the fields in spring, by the watercourses, used to be diapered with the finest of all fine May-flowers. No doubt the eyes of childhood fancied them larger and more beautiful than they really were, but I seem neither in Berkshire nor Oxfordshire to have seen such golden-sceptred flowers since. It is only by running water that these flowers are seen in high perfection. I would go far to see them as I saw them in my boyhood. If the meadow saffron was pretty, the May-flowers were stately and majestic, and of the brightest orange yellow. Open to the view of every passer-by, these were not

> Spent
> Like beauteous flowers, which vainly waste their scent
> Of odours on unhaunted deserts.

Passing onwards, the wayfarer will arrive at another of those pounds which feed the mills on the stream, and have been mentioned above. This one, however, beyond all the others, in the days of my boyhood was full of the finest trout —and not of trout only, but of pike, too. All waters have their tyrant fish, and as the Amazon has its *pirangas*, a small sort of salmon, which tear and lacerate all they meet, so the Rea has its pike, which friend Izaak calls 'the tyrant of the rivers, or the fresh-water wolf.' And such, when it reaches a great size, it certainly is.

Some years ago—a good many, for time passes quickly—a great misfortune happened here to the lovers of the gentle piscatory art. The bilge-water from the lead mines poisoned almost all the fish in the river, having the same effect on life as the bruised branches of the Barbasco (*Jacquinaria armil-*

laris) has upon the finny tribe in the *lagunes* of the Maranon, when even the celebrated electrical eel does not escape. Castelnau, Hartwig tells us in his 'Tropical World' (a very interesting compilation), counted thirty-five different species that fell victims to the clubs and arrows of the Indians, when stupefied by the poisonous branches—just as mischievous boys would poison all the fish in a hole with Cocculus Indicus. Like the fish in the Arabian story, their great desire seemed to be to jump on the land for safety. Only the river tortoise, the same authority relates, and the alligators were proof against the drugging of the waters. I well recollect the indignation expressed by a devoted lover of the angle—who had caught more trout in that pound by dibbing with the down-hill fly than anyone else ever did—when the sullage of that mine was pumped out. 'They did not think about the mischief they were doing,' they said; and his reply was almost in the words of the great Lord Clarendon—he always called him great—'Few men have done more harm than those who have been thought to be able to do least.'

At or towards the upper end of this pound, the little runnel called 'THE CLANBROOK'—which rises in a bog at Sibberscott Isle, which, fifty or sixty years ago, a mischievous wild bull leaped, and was never seen again, only his bones being recovered—trickles gently. At the mouth of it the trout used to feed daintily, and once, as I recollect, a winged snipe took up his abode there. It was often seen, and always spared for its beauty by an old sportsman. I can see it now, with its clear, bright eyes, swimming up and down, like a teal or a wild duck. It was the first time I ever knew a snipe could swim, and it is noted down in Memory's book.

Further on, towards the bridges—a spot where there was a *cut* to convey the water to the Cruck Meole Mill, and a weir over which the waste water flowed with such music as only water makes—there was a little backwater, not much larger than a wide, flat ditch, on which, as boys, we used to catch magpies; no easy bird to catch, for, like the weasel, he is not often found asleep. Our trick was this, taught us by a clever cousin. Under water we laid a rat-trap. After laying it we fixed on it a strong strand, and on the strand we put the

half of a hen's egg, just allowing the trickling water to move it as it moved. The magpie, of course, took it for an egg that had drifted from the side, injured but not emptied of its contents, pounced upon it in an instant, and was caught. Seldom, however, was it that two of these wary birds were taken at one time. How, deponent knoweth not; but the trick was sure to be smelt out.

The little runnel, or runlet, close by which the Old Oak stood, and which has been frequently referred to in the early chapters of this history, trickled into the mill-cut on the other side of the ford. The space of ground between the flow of the stream and the cut was something in the shape of a V. Not far hence was the locality of both the Oaks—the name of the spot was Cruck Meole, to distinguish it from other meoles in the neighbourhood: such as Crow Meole and Brace Meole, further down the stream. The name is otherwise spelt *Mele* in old writers, and Ordericus wrote *Mole*—probably, however, it is a mistake of the transcribers. It is not easy to give a right derivation of the word. Though not altogether *plane hospes* on such matters, I cannot venture to do it; and if I transcribe the note of the learned historians of Shrewsbury (friends departed!), I only show that no advance has been made on the point since 1825, when that very valuable history—one of the very best of its kind—was published.

'MEOLE, from the ancient diphthong *eo*, appears to be a Saxon word, and probably to denote a *mill*; a name very appropriate for a brook on which there are so many. The dictionaries of that language, indeed, do not contain the word; but *meolowe* is *meal*, the material wrought in *mills*, and the Saxons may very well have had two synonyms for the same engine, one of which is now lost. The river Muhl (pronounced Meel), in Upper Saxony, owes its name to the same etymon, for *muhl* is a mill in German. A word very similar exists in the Celtic dialects: Welsh, *melen*; Armoric, *meill*.'

On appealing to my Talking Friend on the subject, he could give me no further information. Only about the pronunciation of the word was he quite sure, and this was

certainly as if it were spelt *Mele*, for so his venerable father had called the old homestead of the Saxons; and he, no doubt, called it by the same name as those who had gone before him. 'And a pleasant spot it is,' he continued, 'for there is at all times the sound of the waters, whether in falling over the weirs, when they are the best of weather-glasses, or whether by night you hear them laughing over the shallows with the water-spirits of old folk-lore, or joining chorus in such tinkling music as the aspen poplar loves to make.'

'What!' said I; 'do the water-spirits still frequent the fords?'

'That I do not say,' replied the Oak, 'but, first or last, I have heard much about them underneath these boughs. And, indeed, I may repeat (for we have touched upon the matter before, instancing the well at Phaley) there is, even in these days, much superstition attached to the sound of waters, and by the oldest of our people wells, and rivers, and fountains are not passed without some floating, indistinct ideas of the old water-sprite—the Neckan of your Saxon forefathers. It was but the other day, indeed, that I caught you reading aloud out of a fresh-minted book some lines which averted my old ears. The numbers I well remember, if I could but recall the words. Were they these?

> In summer, on the headlands
> The Baltic Sea along,
> Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,
> And sings his plaintive song.'

'You are right, my good old chronicler. Of all lands there is none like Denmark, Norway, and Sweden for these waifs of Grammarye. When I was younger than I am I heard and saw much of it. By many a stream in those hospitable lands, as if in consultation with the water-spirits,

> The solitary breeze
> Blustered and slept, and its wild self did tease
> With wayward melancholy.

But for our own stream, the Rea, it is natural I should have the feelings I have. From childhood upwards I fished its pools and shallows, and when there were no fish to be caught,

at least by me, I could sit and muse upon its banks, book in hand, from what time

> The morn
> Purpled the east

till the sun was high in the heavens, or, perchance, far on his way westward, and the shadows were on the ground,

> Gliding meteorous, as evening mist
> Risen from a river o'er the marish glides,
> And gathers ground fast at the labourer's heel
> Homeward returning.'

The shaking of the Old Oak's leaves again warned me that he was about to speak.

'And who,' said the ancient tree, 'was ever more cognizant of your, and your brothers', and all your forefathers', ways than myself? The stream, in its summer's course, flowed not more gently than their lives flowed on in happy contentment; and if ever there was an ancient homestead blessed by the even tenor of its way, it was theirs. Times of jostling and pushing, of steam and rail, never entered into their heads. They lived for the good of others, and I make no doubt, according to such knowledge as I have, that the old folk died for their own good. Druidical and unchristian days are past and gone, and it is pleasant to think that if trees are cut down men are improved. We can pass from ford to ford now, and hear of no disturbances; whereas in days gone by rough work often took place even between the ford by the Meole Bridge and that by the Cruckton Mill. My aged father said that there was always much passing and repassing between the two, though there were no roads such as there are now.'

I ventured here to ask my Talking Friend what was the meaning of Cruck, as applied to Cruck Meole and Cruckton.

'I never heard my venerable father say,' was his reply; 'but my own idea is, that the name is derived from the bends of the stream, and, as you know very well, the speech of the common people is not *crooked*, as you who are educated form the word, but *crucked*. Only see what a bend the stream takes between the two fords, and you need not to gulph yourself in any unfathomable etymological limbo. Many a bath

have you had, and many a fish have you taken, between the Meole Bridge and the weir, and again, in those tempting holes of the Orchard Field, which used to be called the Lower Yard, or, as we Saxons called it in days gone by, 'The Gaard.' Indeed, very many of the words which you consider to be vulgar now were, in my time, very good Saxon.'

And I could not but again call to my mind the days that were gone, and the innocent sports of childhood, and old familiar words, and old familiar faces, and, what Drayton calls in his 'Muses' Elysium,'

> The enamelled bravery of the beauteous spring.

Beaumont, in his 'Epistles to Ben Jonson,' referring to the famous tavern in Cornhill, asks:

> What things have we seen
> Done at the "Mermaid"?

and *we*, old boys now, but the children of the days I am referring to, might well ask, 'What things have we seen between the two mills, and the two fords, and the junction of the Cruckton Brook with the Rea, which takes place close by?' Any that have 'the natural touch' must call such times feelingly to remembrance. Is it Rogers that somewhere or another says—

> The soul of music slumbers in the shell
> Till waked and kindled by the master's spell;
> And feeling hearts, touch them but rightly, pour
> A thousand melodies unheard before?

Haunts of my childhood, I must first forget myself or ever I can forget you!

> Dum memor ipse mei, dum spiritus hos regit artus.

And my Talking Friend's leaves were again on the move, and he said, not without some pride, methought: 'We oaks are the lords of the forest, and have a position to maintain, and give no precedence to more recently introduced trees. Whether they be planes—oriental or occidental—larches, or pines, deodaras or araucarias, thujas, cypresses, or the gigantic Wellingtonias of Vancouver, California, or Columbia,

hold our own we must, as my father, the Old Oak, said; for nothing like *heart of oak* befits old England. But withal I must concede that the willows by the sides of the Rea, between the lower ford and Hanwood, especially in the autumn months, when their grey-white leaves are turned upwards by every wind that blows, have an undeniable and unmistakable beauty. The wood of the willow, no doubt, is not, like our wood, hardy and trusty—on the contrary, it is villainous and nought—but the hand that planted those trees had something more than profit in view, and those willows by the water-courses, during all the latter years of his life, for their elegance and their beauty, made him happy returns. Dear, good old man, how he loved to halt under my shade, and what pleasant, kindly words had he for all passers-by! My old, withered boughs will be serer still, and my knotted and gnarled trunk harder still, or ever I shall look upon his like again. Of all the fields he owned those fields which you call the Harrisals—Upper and Lower—were, I think, his greatest favourites. He loved the willows and he loved the waters—the trouts, as they sported with the May-fly, the water-hens and the water-ousels, the warder-crows and the belated heron on his way back to the Severn. Such love of the country as his was is always the making of the country.'

And again the Old Oak's words set me thinking, and I considered how very much good quiet, unobtrusive men may do in their places.

> Thus the pearl
> Shines in the concave of its purple bed;
> And pointed shells, along some winding shore,
> Catch with indented folds the glancing sun.

Certainly the Talking Oak has formed a just opinion of the person he spoke of. He did fill his place well—lived beloved and died lamented. Those willows, too, that he spoke of by the Rea's side—many of them now thrown down by late heavy storms; not snapped off, but twisted, as willows will twist—were as beautiful as he said they were. How often, with my coracle (to be spoken of in another chapter), have I passed up and down amongst them, and tied trimmers to one of their elbows, from which they had thrown out beautiful red roots!

Advanced in years, I can hardly realise anything more beautiful than was the course of the Rea through these fine grass meadows, and, happily, the rail has not hurt them. Indeed, I am not sure that the bridge by the Hanwood Weir is not a picturesque object when looked upon from Meole. Looking upon the green sward as a carpet, you might have used Milton's words and have said—

Twisted deft the woof.

Certainly, as each meadow teemed with the produce of the spring, the hues of the varied flowers were like the rainbow's. In Ovid's words—

Sæpe ego digestos volui numerare colores,
Nec potui. Numero copia major erat.

If Keats's words could have been realised—and I do not say that his illustration might not—the stream of the Rea, with its sallows and its willows, was the spot, above all others, for the curious investigator of natural history; for

One who would look
Athwart the sallows of a river nook
To catch a glance at silver-throated eels.

Eels, however, as it has been mentioned before in these chapters, are seldom to be seen except in thunderstorms, which disturb their beds, or at the fall of the leaf, when they go with their heads downwards to the Severn in the October floods. At this time great quantities used to be taken at the Cruck Meole and Hanwood Weirs, and certainly better eels were never eaten. The people, too, hereabouts have no superstition about them, and the satirist's line would have passed them harmlessly by:

Vos anguilla manet longæ cognata colubræ;

on which it may be remarked, by the way, that Homer, in two well known passages, makes a clear distinction between eels and fish, styling them

Ἐγχέλυές τε καὶ ἰχθύες.

Passing on from these beautiful meadows, we reach the

Hanwood Weir, thrown up to feed the cut which supplies the manufactory—one of those great, ugly, money-making red-brick buildings, with its tall, grimy chimney, which utterly destroyed the beauty of this lovely village.

Never was such a mistake made as in permitting this little corner of the parish (originally of Ford, not of Hanwood) to be purchased by the children of Mammon. It has been repented of long and at leisure.

Beneath the weir, the sound of whose waters is always soft and sweet in summer days, and soothing even in winter, there is what is called, in the country's speech, 'a great hole'; and never, or rarely, is this weir-hole without its tyrant pike. When one is caught it is soon taken possession of by another.

Like what is called the inundation of 1811, before alluded to, the course of the Rea is materially altered close by. After leaving the weir-hole, it then passed almost under the cottage where the wheelwright's shop now is, and the waters of the flood came nearly in at the bedroom windows. Even then it was tenanted by a wheelwright—a curious old man, and a bit of a wag and a humourist, yclept Richard Humphreys. Amongst other things he had a rusty old lancet or two, and was the country phlebotomist. But his most remarkable feat was his going *up* the brook and marking such timber as he could find amongst the waifs and strays—or, rather, the *jetsam and the flotsam*—of that much-remembered overflowing of the waters. Another person would have supposed that the timber of the wheelwright's yard would have been carried *down* the stream. Not so, however, old Richard Humphreys. The eddies, he said, had carried his fellies and his shaft-timbers clean and quite the other way; and, if report be square with the old man's name, he held his own and was benefited by the flotage. His wife was a very curious old woman, and kept a little shop in an inner room about the size of a closet. In it were many little drawers, and one contained the marvellous *mint-cakes* of our boyhood—never to be seen now! Amongst other things she had divers pictures pasted up there, *very red*, and sundry ballads, and a marvellous sketch of Bonaparte seated on a cannon. This cannon was poised in the air, and with it he was about to invade England.

Everybody then talked of Bony, as he was called, and nurses frightened children into stillness, and sometimes into fits, by saying, '*Hush! Bony is coming*!'

The course of the stream is now diverted, and passes close by the manufactory, after which it makes a bend by what used to be called 'THE DELL'—a pretty spot, full of cowslips, primroses, wild violets, harebells, and columbines. In those days the adjoining house was occupied by a fiery old Indian colonel—a very benevolent and well-informed man; one who had seen much, and had also much to tell. He was the personal friend of most of the chief Indians in repute at that time, and came over on the trial of Warren Hastings. He nearly frightened myself and my next brother out of our wits by threatening to commit us to prison for having taken the key out of a lock and having stuffed it full of peas—the few we had left, having shot the rest out of an old Spanish blunderbuss, of which we got possession, and used to hide in a stack meanwhiles. He looked, good man! as if for all the world he would have committed us. And yet, hot and fiery as he was, 'the milk of human kindness' was never soured in him, and the Begum read his features right when she threw herself and her child upon his mercy. I may add, by the way, that many of the anecdotes told in the 'Table Talk' of Samuel Rogers are very old affairs, and favourites with this old Indian colonel.

He left a MS.—a curious one—which commences thus:

'The subjugation of the Rohillas by the Nawab of Oude (Suja al Dowla), with the assistance afforded him in that enterprise by the English Government of Bengal, forming an epocha fertile with important consequences, has induced a witness to the transaction and partaker in the expedition to give such an account of it as fell within his observation and information, together with some previous account of their origin and settlement in the north-east part of Hindostan.'

The dell passed where the good man's children used to fish, the stream swept gracefully under the house. On the other side were hanging woods—one of oak, the other of larch and pines, beautiful at all times, but most beautiful in the autumn. Still advancing eastward, and before coming

to the ford, was one of those rustic foot-bridges which always add so much to the scene.

Quod sol progrediens vel conspicit occiduus sol.

For shade, on the high noon of a hot Midsummer's day, commend me to these hangers—as they would be called in Hampshire and Sussex—and to the soft lullaby of the Rea's clear, crystal waters that flowed beneath them. Here the birds love to nestle, and the timid hare on his form in the fern, with great, round, lustrous eyes, lets you pass, not unwatched, but herself almost undisturbed. The smallest leaf will afford shelter to some little insect in the noonday sun. None so insignificant or small but they may do their duty to their neighbour one way or another. So at sea as on land; for the 'fry of some species of fish have been seen to come out from under the umbrella-shaped body' of the large medusæ of Guernsey, 'when disturbed, and return again to their curious shelter.'

Such simple truths as these might be heard inculcated, with all the fullest glories of the everlasting Gospel, in the little church just above the foot-bridge and the ford, which was approached by a little lane, on the sides of which there used to grow, in my boyhood, the periwinkle and the St. John's wort—the latter as wild and as naturally as in the Cruck Meole hedge leading down to the Cruckton Mill; the former probably waifs from the churchyard, unless they were planted there by some kind-hearted, benevolent ladies, of the name of Hughes, who lived close by at the beginning of the century.

Of this retired spot, and of the unpretending little church among the yew-trees, the reader may find an account in the seventh chapter of 'The Last of the Old Squires.' A more quiet resting-place may scarce be found, and I could like (but it is a dream!) that the dust and ashes of my mortality might be laid where my forefathers lie, 'in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Where the tree falls it will lie, but in falling, perhaps, the reminiscences of youth may have their place without impropriety.

Cœlumque
Aspicit, et dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos.

Much there is to be repented of in looking back; but in faith, in fear, in love there is great hope in looking forwards. Thank God for that hope!

And though those sparks were almost quenched with sin,
Yet they whom that Just One hath justified
Have them increased with heavenly light within,
And, like the widow's oil, still multiplied.[1]

Since the demise of the Last of the Old Squires the dear old church has been entirely restored, and excellent schools built and attached. Nothing can be more satisfactory to those who love it well. What a beautiful form of expression is that in the evangelical prophet, '*Thou shalt call thy walls* SALVATION, *and thy gates* PRAISE'!

It was a lovely morning, and the sun shone bright, and I was on my way from Meole to Hanwood. As usual, I had stopped under the Old Oak, and I heard him rustling and holding converse with himself. No doubt royal oaks of some hundreds of years' standing must have a great deal to think about and a great deal to say; but on the present occasion all that my Talking Friend had to say was intended for my own ear, and I listened the more willingly to his antique talk.

'Such a morning as this,' were his leafy words, 'is the morning, of all others, for you to return over the Hanwood banks. The view will be perfect, and you can tell my good brother oaks by the Watling Street that I am well, though old. Old Tredithic, my venerable father's friend, never ascended those banks, and the terrace above the church, but with renewed delight. Once there, for the time being, he seemed to forget what, at other times, he never forgot—Anglesey (which is Mona), and his aboriginal countrymen, the Cymry. It was then that his old Druidical superstitious notions and vanities paled before the little old wooden church (for there it was long before the Normans came), and its *broach*, as we old Saxons called it, or its modest spire of shingle; for from the priest that was in those days he heard

[1] Davies, *Immortality of the Soul.*

of the evangelical light that was poured forth from the Bible within its rough-cast walls—the more precious at that time for that, as you know so well, it was not printed, but written word by word—and how, when they were sick and ill, the people used to send for him; and how, again, their souls hung upon the promises of the everlasting Gospel, so nigh unto all those that worship with a holy worship. Many corruptions,' continued my Talking Friend, 'which were afterwards introduced had no place here. What you would now call the epistles and the gospels—recited from sacramentaries and lectionaries—the Sermon on the Mount, the parables, the Psalms, and such other easy Scriptures, were what the simple people listened to, and, with the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and some plain, easy collects, they were not only instructed and delighted, but greatly comforted. My venerable father would often say that his intercourse with the priest of Hanwood did more than anything else to soften Tredithic's mind, and that as he advanced in years his visits to the Hanwood Banks were more and more frequent, notwithstanding that the church of Pontesbury was nearer to his dwelling. Abide by my counsel,' was my Talking Friend's ending words, 'and return over those banks this day.'

I took his advice, and I did so. And who from that elevated terrace could look north, south, east, or west, and not be moved? If ever there was a spot where one might read with more than usual fascination, looking on to Gospel promises, that exquisite passage in the Book of Genesis, it was surely this.

'*And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.*'

But let us take our stand on those banks above the church

and the rectory, and let us revel for a while in the prospect which old Tredithic loved so much.

> Unless above himself he can
> Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!

Then, nearly north, are the Denbighshire Hills, now so soft and sunshiny, on which, however, and on the Montgomeryshire ones, are to be seen the first snows of winter. The latter trend more westward, and from the *Breidden* and the *Moel y Golfa* are refracted, far empurpled, the 'loveliest and softest hues' of the evening sunset. Who, as he rowed in his boat on the Great Pool, as it used to be called, above the homestead of Cruck Meole, has not seen such sunsets as he can never recount? The remembrance of such evenings, and of days gone by, and of dead ones—not dead, but gone before only—is no small heirloom, as I think. They are needed not here, to use some lines of Chamberlayne's, from the 'Pharonnida,'

> To guild invention, when it would express
> Things more sublime than mortal happiness.

Intervening, and before the eye rests on the Denbighshire Hills, comes in the well known crest of Nestcliffe, with its out-cropping rocks—whence stone, they say, was quarried to build the castle, the abbey, and the walls of Shrewsbury—and its woods, and the equally well known Kymerton's Cave, that *mauvais sujet* of an old family and good lineage, better known in these parts than Sir Francis, the poet, the author of 'Leoline and Cydaris,' and the translator into Latin of Chaucer's 'Troilus and Cressida,' for his feats were wild like Robin Hood's. 'Wild Humphrey's' name is still a name of great repute about Middle, and Knockin, and Howley, and Montford, where he leaped the bridge and baffled the sheriff.

> His name is registered in remembrance
> For to endure by long continuance.

Beyond the cliff comes in the line of Oswestry, or, as the country people call it, Ogestry, a portion of the country about which old Tredithic used to speak much, and would call it *Maserfield* and *Croes-oswallt.* But this, again, is a matter for

the antiquarian, who, in the 'Saxon Chronicle,' under the year A.D. 642, will find recorded Oswald's death at the hands of Penda, the Southumbrian. Oswald was king of Northumbria, and bore an excellent name.

Almost west, and south of the Breidden and the Moel y Golfa, is to be seen the Long Mountain—Cefn Digol, I think the Welsh call it, as they call the Beacon Ring, that well-known circular encampment by the name of Caer Difd. Looked upon anywhere in this direction, the Long Mountain was a remarkable object. Like any outstretching line, or cordillera, it was, once seen, to be held in the mind's eye always, for it combined the down of the south of England with the mountain of the north. The reminiscences of childhood are lasting, and I seem to see it now as I did from The Marsh when a boy.

Still further to the south by west, and on our Shropshire border, stretches the Corndon, or Querndon—names so well known and familiar in these parts, whilst so little is known, beyond guesswork, of its Carnedds. Long yarns were they which old Tredithic would spin about them, as

> Bleaching with the bones of men
> In some forgotten battle slain.

Yet nearer home, and closer to this lovely terrace of Hanwood, were the Stiperstones, mentioned in a former chapter, and the Vasson's Woods, and Habberley Hole—the far-famed seat of storm and tempest in these parts, and notorious as Shakespeare's 'still vexed Bermoothes,' whence Ariel tells Prospero that he called her up at midnight to fetch dew. Then closer, as though one may so lay one's hand upon the saddle and leap upon its back, comes Pontesford Hill, and the edge of the Oaks' Woods—keen cut before stormy weather, but sleepy and beautiful on a summer's noon, or a summer's evening, when the weather is fine, or is about to be so. But no matter when, the prospect is bewitching ; one at which

> Passion's troubled sea might settle in
> A smooth and gentle calm.

Still trending south, and almost south, is the Long Mynd —*well* to be noted by every observer, *better* by such geologists

as Sir Roderick Murchison. It is a constituent part of the Long Forest, the framework of which may be very well seen in Mr. Eyton's map, illustrative of 'Domesday,' prefixed to the sixth volume of his 'Antiquities of Shropshire,' where will be found also, not only a description of the Long Forest itself, but a very valuable survey also of the Shropshire forests 'on the state of a great number of woods and bores which appear to have been subject to the Long Forest.' It is in Latin, and in it the Long Mynd is called 'Boscus de Lange Manede, bene custoditus de quercu et subbores.'

Directly south of the Hanwood Banks is Church Stretton, which bears in its double name a Christian advanced post and a Roman station on a Roman *stratum—strat,* or road; that is to say, the *Stratum Vitellinum,* or the Watling Street. But to this place we must revert again by-and-by.

Meanwhile, turning directly north, we see before us from these lovely banks, Pinhill and Grinshill—Pinhill: whether so called from *pin* or *pen*, a summit; as the Alpes *Pen*ninæ, *Pen*maenmawr, *Pen*maenbach, is no matter—a well known spot to all Shrewsbury school boys for its *whiggy knoll,* impracticable on common occasions, and between callings-over, but much longed after in my day, because the ravens used to build there; and to get a raven's egg was a triumph.

> Ex uno quidam celebres, aut torquis ademptæ,
> Aut corvi titulos auxiliaris habet.

Dear old Butler, how he loved a pun! how many bad ones he made! how we encouraged him to do so, and stamped the floor till the dust, most learned dust, flew out in clouds!

Next comes Grinshill, still known for its quarries of white freestone, and for the not distant residence of one, now gone before, the clergyman's friend and curate (so he liked to be called when free from his official duties in London)—the late Lord Hill, the Iron Duke's right hand in the Peninsula, and of whom the great soldier used to say, as Lord Gough said more recently of Havelock, 'HILL is always ready; HILL is always to be relied upon.'

A little further north by east the eye rests upon Hawkstone, the beautiful seat of the Hill family, and a spot always

to be visited by strangers. A place it is of old name and repute, and was some time a member of Marchhamley, now in the parish of Hodnet—a parish to be much remembered, not for the hills only, but as the birthplace of the great Lord Clive, at the Styche in 1724, and for the saintly Heber, India's best bishop, who was for fifteen years the rector.

Thither our saintly Heber went,
In promise and in pledge,
That England, from her guilty torpor roused,
Should zealously and wisely undertake
Her awful task assigned.
Thither, devoted to the work, he went;
There spent his precious life;
There left his holy dust.

Many and many a time had Heber admired those spires —especially St. Mary's, which are to be seen coming out so beautifully from these banks—the spires of Shrewsbury, or, as old Tredithic called it, Pengwerne, to be spoken of in more than one of the following chapters. Sometimes, under peculiar states of the atmosphere, they seemed to be so near that one might touch them, and yet they were four miles distant, or nearly so. But, by-and-by,

Give me leave to tell
How Shrewsberie stands, and of the castle seate,
The river large, and stonie bridge so greate.

Almost due east is the far-famed Shropshire Hill—of which, as of the Devil's Dyke, in Sussex, marvellous stories are told—known in earlier days by the name of the Forest of Mount Gilbert, in latter days by the well-known toast, ALL ROUND THE WREKIN, drunk to in the hardest days of the Peninsular War; drunk to in India, at Delhi, Lucknow, Seetapore, and Bareilly, in the saddest days of that sad mutiny, when all but English pluck paled and faded. Eyton says that how the Wrekin acquired the name of Mount Gilbert is a fact too old for investigation—certainly Salopians care nothing about it. To them it is THE WREKIN, and nothing but THE WREKIN; and all who have lived in these parts, and have gone forth through the world as soldiers or travellers, and have climbed the highest accessible points of the Alps,

the Andes, or the Himalayas, have still in their mind's eye kept a place for THE WREKIN, and have bethought them of absent friends. It is Wither, I think, who somewhere says—

> And he that bears an honest heart about him
> Needs never fear what changes be without him.

Still looking out from these banks, east by south, coming out well in the distance, is Acton Burnell, one of Roger Fitz-Corbet's 'Domesday' manors, and the Actune of that invaluable survey. The first Burnel of whom Mr. Eyton finds any authentic mention is William Burnell, who attested a charter of Peter, prior of Wenlock, between 1169 and 1176. But he had said before: 'I cannot affirm, nor will I deny, that Roger, the "Domesday" tenant of Actune, was ancestor of those Burnels who afterwards gave the manor a distinctive name. Such a descent rests on the average probability that the tenant of any given manor in the twelfth century was lineal heir of the tenant in the eleventh century.' But for this, which is an antiquarian's question, and for other interesting details relative to this time-honoured spot, the reader is referred to Mr. Eyton's interesting account. It will be enough to refer here to Edward I.'s well-known chancellor, Robert Burnel, Bishop of Bath and Wells, and to the parliament held there (when the statute *De Mercatoribus* was enacted) in October 1283, at which time, it is said, the king and his court were received in the castle—the lords in a guest hall in the park, and the commons in the fabulous old barn belonging to Shrewsbury Abbey. Such, even yet, is the common talk; but we must concede to the remarks of the well-known historians of Shrewsbury:

> Consortes operum, per quos correcta vetustas.

'This is a tradition founded upon modern notions. Wherever the commons sate, it was certainly in the same apartment with the lords, the three estates of the realm not separating into two chambers till the reign of Edward III.'

The name of Acton, or Actune as it is in 'Domesday,' speaks for itself. Formerly this was quite the land of oaks; and he who shall visit these and other not far distant woods,

in the doing which he will have to pass many a musical stream, will have what Thomas Churchyard calls 'a natural secret touched.' He had visited many such places.

> The noyse of streames, in sommer morning cleare,
> The chirpe, and charme, and chaunt of every birde
> That passeth there, a second heaven is—
> No hellish sound, more like an earthly bliss—
> A music sweete, that through our eares shall creepe
> By secret art, and lull a man asleepe.

South by east, as a sort of boundary, comes in the lengthened crescent, if I may so call it, of Wenlock Edge—well called by the old Saxons Wirmica, or the Windy Place, but by the old British Llan Meirion—celebrated for its convent, founded by Milburga, daughter of King Mervald and niece of Wulfhere, who was buried there, and even yet for its beautiful abbey church, built by Roger de Montgomery about 1080.

'The valley, or basin, which flanks this terrace'—the ridge, that is, of Wenlock Edge, fifteen miles in length—'is again bounded by a parallel, but more broken and unequal, chain of hills. The Stretton, Caradoc, Lawley, Frodesley, and Acton Burnell Hills form this survey.' These, too, are seen to the south-east from the Hanwood Banks; but the stranger must not confound the Caer Caradoc, which lies between Knighton and Clun, with the Caradoc seen in this direction—called by the people hereabouts THE CARADOC, or, still more colloquially or locally, THE CURDOC, QUERDOC, or QUORDOC, one of the chief positions of that grand old chief Caradoc, or Caractacus.

Almost due south comes in the Church Stretton district, completing the panorama; a demesne manor, says Mr. Eyton, first of the Earls of Mercia, and afterwards of the Norman Earls of Shrewsbury; the *Stratum* of 'Domesday,' in Saxon form of speech *Street Town.* Leland, in his day, described it as a 'pretty uplandish townlett'; and he added: 'This townlett is the chiefest building that is in Stretton Dale, which is enclosed with great hills, well wooded in some places. It is in length but a three miles, and in it be three Strettons—

Little, Great, and Ould Stretton. This Stretton Dale longeth to the Earl of Arundel.'

William Fitz-Alan was castellan of Stretton from Easter 1192 to Easter 1197. Eyton again mentions that on August 2, 1216, when King John was at Worcester, he was then in occupation of the castle, in defiance, probably, of the king. The castle, most likely, was at what is now called Brocard's, or Brockhurst, Castle ; but it has been dismantled for six centuries. Camden describes it as 'surrounded by verdant meads, which anciently were fish-ponds'; which are, Mr. Eyton points out, the king's *vivarves* alluded to in the 'Hundred Roll,' 1255 ; to which he adds, by-and-by : 'A part of the Roman road, which, in fact, gave a name to the Roman station of Stretton, seems to have been called *Botte Street*, but probably at a later year than that of the Romans. The etymology of *Botte Street*, whatever it be, extended to a neighbouring wood called Bottewood, and a neighbouring vill called Bottevil, or Botte-field.' From these banks of Hanwood it seemed a long way off, and yet it has been a spot for visitations of the clergy for many a year. Bishop Swinfield's visitation, Sunday, April 30, 1290, is now well known from a recent publication.

And having accomplished the survey of this lovely terrace, known to the people as the Hanwood Banks, I exclaimed to one very dear to me, 'My Talking Friend was right. Earth may boast of pretty spots—as there are pretty spots on the earth—but there is none prettier than this.' And I called to mind the lines of the tender Cowper in 'The Task' :

> For I have loved the rural walk through lanes
> Of grassy swarth, close-cropped by nibbling sheep,
> And skirted thick with intertexture firm
> Of thorny boughs ; have loved the rural walk
> O'er hills, through valleys, and by rivers' brink.
> . . . . . .
> There, fast rooted in their bank,
> Stand, never overlooked, our favourite elms,
> That screen the herdsman's solitary hut ;
> While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,
> That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
> The sloping land recedes into the clouds,
> Displaying on its varied side the grace

Of hedgerow beauties numberless, square tower,
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulates upon the listening ear,
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages remote.
Scenes must be beautiful which, daily viewed,
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years.
Praise justly due to those that I describe.

Passing by and through Hanwood, the little river Rea leaves Whitley, Panson, and Welbatch a little to the south, all watered by a little runlet. The latter is the Huelbec of 'Domesday,' which was held by Hanine in Saxon times, as the time-honoured Old Oak had told my Talking Friend. In the name of the place we have the aspirated *w* of the Saxon language. 'In modern English,' Mr. Eyton remarks, 'we place the aspirate in these forms after the *w*, as in *when*, *where*, &c.; so that the "Domesday" Huelbec is tantamount to the modern word *Whelbec*.' Bach and bec—the latter the more common term in 'Domesday'—are said to mean a *hollow*, a *bottom*, or a *valley*. *Al*, on the other hand, usually implies an elevated place. Mr. Hartshorne's 'Salopia Antiqua' may be turned to for the both.

Following the course of the stream we come to Hanwood Mill, of which, oddly enough, being so likely a spot, no mention is made in 'Domesday'; whereas Edgebold, just above, is specially mentioned under the name of *Edbaldinesham*, which was held by Eddred in Saxon times. Much business is done there now, both with water and steam—the latter not being devised when the Mill of Welbatch was called *Molinum hiemale, non æstivum*; that is to say, a mill which will grind in winter, not in summer. It is a pretty spot, and the man who holds it is one of the most enterprising, valuable men in the district.

A little east, but an object to the wayfarer, is Lyth Hill, known in former days as the Forest of Lye—now called Lythwood—a place to which, as we have seen in the history of Rudolf de Rea, the good priest of Hanwood used to resort. No doubt he loved the high ground, and could see his own dear Hanwood Banks before him. In later days, 'August 19, 1226, King Henry III., then at Shrewsbury, orders the chief

forester of Shropshire to allow the canons of St. Chad four oak trees in the Box of Lye towards the building of their church.' The right of what is called in Sussex 'wooding' was retained for a long while after, and the poor lepers of St. Giles had their share; but the great value of Lythwood comes out in the time of Edward III., when the great grant of the wood there was made to the abbey. Lyth is by no means an uncommon name—as we have here Great Lyth, Little Lyth, and Lythwood—and Mr. Eyton makes the old Handislit, which is the modern Stapleton, to be the Saxon Hanis Lyth.

Still passing onwards, we come to Pulley Mill, with Pulley and Pulley Common, with Bayston Hill to the east, the stream all the while meandering, as only small streams like this ever do,

> From standing lake to tripping ebb, that stole
> With soft foot towards the deep.

Of old time this Pulley was a dank, dreary, and a marshy place, deriving its name, some say, from the Celtic *Pwl*, which means as much. It is the Polelic of 'Domesday,' held under Roger de Montgomery by Teodulf. Few people in the district who do not know of Pulley Common, and those who are observant will have noted the peculiar intonation of the natives in pronouncing the name. An interesting account of Pulley is to be seen in Mr. Eyton's 'Shropshire Antiquities.' Polileye Moor is one of its names in ancient deeds; and in 1273 Engelard, son and heir of Ralph Marshall, was forester of Puliley. The same authority states: 'I think Mortimer's Manor must have been that part of Pulley which is now in the parish of Brace Meole, while Teodulf's Manor was that part which is now in St. Julian's parish.'

It was on speaking of Pulley on one occasion that my Talking Friend told me a curious fact mentioned to him by his time-honoured father, which was this: 'So well off were the people of Pulley and Meole Brace,' presently to be mentioned, 'that Æthelstan's royal command had to be carried out, and the Tungerefa was obliged to seek another vill in the neighbourhood wherein to find his poor men to support;

and, if I recollect right, he chose one from Monk, or Crow Meole, or from Shelton, where his friend the great oak lived.'

Not being alive to this bit of history, I was obliged to turn to Kemble's 'Anglo-Saxons in England,' and there, sure enough, I read a corroboration of the venerable oak's story. He was an aged, but a very truthful oak indeed.

'It is well known that every church and monastery comprised among its necessary buildings a xenodochium, hospitium, or similar establishment; a kind of hospital for the reception and refection of the poor, the homeless, and the wayfarer; but I allude more particularly to the foundations which the piety of the clergy or laity established without the walls of the churches or monasteries. Æthelstan commanded the royal reeves throughout his realm to feed and clothe one poor man each. The allowance was to be, from every two farms, an amber of meal, a shank of bacon, or a ram worth fourpence, monthly, and clothing for the whole year. The reeves here intended must have been the bailiffs (villici, præpositi, tungerefan) of the royal vills; and if they could not find a poor man in their vill, they were to seek him in another.'

A very pleasing thing it is to think that there could have been any vill in the land in such a case, and a matter to be noted that the venerable oak had a great idea that this was the case with Pulley and Meole Brace. As Rosalind says, 'O, how full of briars is this working-day world!' I could have desired nothing better than to have lived in such a well-provided place. It had been

> The continent and summary of my fortune.

Still wandering on, and picking up what skirts the river, we come to Sutton, which is, of course, South-town, from its relative position to Shrewsbury; notorious in my boyhood—I should say in my childhood, when the favourite walk of Mr. Cox was there and to St. Giles—for its salubrious spring, as salt as salt water, if I recollect aright, and considered serviceable in all scrofulous diseases. No place in the neighbourhood, in days gone by, was better known than Sutton

Spa; and I am told there are hot and cold baths there still. Not impossibly the lepers took advantage of these waters, St. Giles' being not far off. In earlier times, it may be added, although leprosy was common enough, the term was frequently applied to cutaneous diseases generally.

Even here, under the wood that used to be, the trouts of the Rea—or, as the stream was invariably called in this part, 'the Meole,' or 'Mole Brook'—were notorious. Like the salmon in other rivers, they worked upwards from the Severn. The proud Spaniards of Segovia will tell how Charles I. of England was received in 1623 by the Count of Chinchon with trouts of wonderful greatness. Such trouts, for greatness and for flavour, the Rea could have supplied. Thomas Barker, above mentioned, had no doubt taken his share.

And then, passing leisurely on, we come to the eastern suburb of Shrewsbury, on which the abbey stands, 'the precinct of which is bounded on the south and west by the Rea, commonly called Meole Brook, just at its point of confluence with the Severn.' The place of confluence is Coleham; which, as I suppose, took its name from the old Shrewsbury family which gave its name to 'Cole Hall.' In a certain document, which Mr. Eyton calls a kind of chartulary of Oswestry Hospital, 1209–1210, mention is made of nine tenements in Coleham; and about the year 1220 William, son of Alan Clerk, sold to the Hospital of St. John, at Oswestry, for 8*s.*, a rent of 2*s.*, issuing out of a croft in Coleham. Archdeacon Owen mentions that 'Thomas Colle appears in Prynne's "Lists of the Members of Parliament," as representative of this borough in 1337.'

Many and long a day ago, beneath the bridge of Coleham, I espied a superannuated old chub who had worked his way down the Rea towards the Severn. There he was, blobbing and blowing with his leathern mouth, for all the world like a fish out of water, and not knowing what taste offended his palate. He had evidently got into some of what used to be called the *back-water*, into which some sullage—whether from the brewery above or from one of the manufactories—had entered; and it was altogether unpleasant to him, and he wished himself back again. We used to fancy the graylings,

when we caught them, smelt of violets; but on his introduction to the Hafren of the Cymry, nothing smelt to him

Fragrant of fume, sweete as any flower.

I am not fond of chub, as I hinted before; but I could not but consider this old gentleman as a fish of very good taste and judgment.

It was a glorious day; I had just returned from one of my wanderings, and was passing under the shadow of my Talking Friend, when suddenly I heard the rustling of his leaves—his usual form of speech—and he said:

'I am glad you have not despised your native stream, and that you love the meanderings of the Rea, after having visited so many other rivers. A fixture myself, I have never had the advantage of travel; but I have picked up from passers-by that many travellers might as well have stopped at home. I perfectly well recollect a conceited prig once saying that no honey, for instance, was worth the eating in England, whereas our valley of the Rea was full of the finest and the sweetest, and the *beo-ceorl*, or bee-master, was no mean man amongst our Saxon forefathers: the sale of honey and of mead made his fortune. But this prig could speak of nothing but Hybla or Hymettus, if I recollect the outlandish names; and I thought he should have known better, for his early days had been spent amongst the woods and the heaths of the Stiperstones, and he must have heard the spinning-wheel of the night-jar at even and the hum of the bees by day. They will even sometimes visit my old leaves, and I like their presence well.'

And I recollected at once how, in my boyhood, all cottagers kept their bees, and how I had often drunk the mead of the valley. Nor did I forget how, in after years, I had had a constant supply of honey from the New Forest, where, as Mr. Wise tells us, the '*beo-ceorl* still tends his hives, and brews the old English mead, and lives by the labours of his bees;' whilst 'the honey-buzzard still makes his nest in the beeches round Lyndhurst, and the hen-harrier on the moors near Bratley.' And all at once, as if close by me, was heard the hum of bees. So real was the scene—

I saw them ply their harmless robberies,
And caught the fragrance which the sundry flowers,
Fed by the stream with soft, perpetual showers,
Plenteously yielded to the vagrant breeze.
There bloomed the strawberry of the wilderness ;
The trembling eye-bright showed her saffron blue ;
The thyme her purple, like the blush of even :
And, if the breath of some to no caress
Invited, forth they peeped so fair to view,
All kinds alike seemed favourites of heaven.

I must not omit to mention here a very remarkable instance of the pertinacity of my Talking Friend, who, under ordinary circumstances, was by no means averse to improvement. But the fact is, self came in ; and where any of us only turn on the pivot of self, we must be constantly very much in the dark.

I had had an attack of ague, to which, off and on, I had been subject for years. As usual, when the fit was off, I had come down to my native air to recruit, and had brought with me the usual quantity of quinine—so efficacious between the accesses, and so invaluable for what foreigners call *cutting* it, which means hindering its return as the month comes round. And so it chanced I was speaking of the virtues of the *quina-quina*, or bark of barks, as the Peruvians call it, beneath the Old Oak's shade. Was it a reality or was it a fancy? Whether or not, methought the bark of my ancient friend grew darker, and there was an unusual stiffness in his deportment, and the quivering of his leaves was harsher as they shook out the words which follow :

'In my thick old periderm there is, very likely, little virtue, for it has been these centuries scorched by the sun and hardened by the winds of heaven ; but my inward heart and pith is fully developed, and the *bark* of our forefathers, to say nothing of its tanning process, was not, as you seem to think, overlooked even as a medicine, any more than the bitters of the willow by the Rea side. You may smile at what I say, but *bark*, in some shape or another, was an Anglo-Saxon remedy ; and your quinine of modern days—not more than 300 years old—was, in lesser quantities, to be

found in our forests. Old oaks know something, I can tell you!' and he preserved a dignified silence.

I must confess I was very much surprised, for, although I had heard much of the charms and incantations of the Anglo-Saxons in what might be called their pharmacopœia: of the virtues of the mugwort and of the herb *betony*, the latter of which was to be gathered in the month of August *without iron*, and was profitable both to man's soul and to his body, shielding him against nightly monsters and against baneful visions and dreams—although I had heard of all this and of ugly images made from the mandrake's root, and the shriek that issued from the ground as it snapped at the fork; of many other herbs and remedies too long to tell of: yet had I never heard of the *bark* of the oak as a specific in the days alluded to. I therefore thought it best, for the present, to be as reserved as my Talking Friend (how often does the *altum silentium* cover ignorance as deep!), and to maintain the same dignified silence.

> Plain-path'd experience, the unlearnèd's guide,
> Her simple followers evidently shows
> Sometimes what schoolmen scarcely can decide,
> Nor yet wise reason evidently knows.

And in turning from the Old Oak to myself, I can only hope that someone who reads this chapter may be induced to throw together any historical or other details which appertain to the district in which he lives. Old things are passing away, and unless what remains be gathered up and stored away carefully, fifty years more will bring a great oblivion upon what even now is but retained in the mind of old chroniclers of the past. Some may say that this is trivial and of little use; but there can be no spot in one's native land which has not its pleasant reminiscences: and when any in a foreign land reads of the village of his birth, and of the stream that flowed by it, and of the parish church, and the churchyard, wherein is deposited the dust of his forefathers, something better than cold utilitarianism warms his mind: and whether he be on the Indus or the Ganges' banks, or those of the Missouri or the Mississippi; amid the wilds of the Orinoco or those of the Amazon or the Parana;

whether it be his laborious pleasure, with a Burton, or a Speke, or a Petherick, to follow in the track of a Mungo Park—

> Scorrer l' Egitto, e penetrar fin dove
> Fuor d' incognito fonte il Nilo muove ;

whatever his course, wherever his wanderings, when such thoughts come across his mind, he will have the great felicity of realising the meaning of the English word HOME.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT THE LITTLE RIVER REA SAW WHEN IT ENTERED THE OLD BRITISH 'PENGWERNE,' 'SCROBBESBYRIG,' 'SCIROPESBERIE,' OR THE MODERN 'SHREWSBURY.'

Fuerunt antiquitus tres principales in Gualiâ curiæ: Dinevor in Sadwalliâ, Aberfraw in Norwalliâ (scilicet apud Moniam), in Powisiâ apud *Pengwerne*, quod nunc Slopesburia dicitur. Sonat autem Pengwern, *Caput Alneti.*—LELAND, *Collect.* iii. 93, Hearne, 2nd Edit.

Writers in Welsh caull it Pengwerne, id est, *Caput Alneti.* Shrobbesbury is the very English word truly written, not much different from *Pengwerne.* Salopia in Latin goeth far from the Welsh name.—*Itin.*, vol. iv. 95, fol. 180, 6, Hearne, 2nd Edit.

He is a true Salopian who, though well acquainted with both hemispheres, delights in talking only of Shrewsbury.—MRS. PIOZZI'S *Autob.*, ii. 268.

NO common view is that which is obtained from Coleham Bridge, under which the Rea—which is the Meole Brook—enters the Severn, or Hafren, as the Cymry called that noble river. On a summer's day I could stand upon that bridge an hour 'by Shrewsbury clock,' and not be satisfied with the sight, so much of beauty is there to be drunk in. I once proposed to my lamented friend Copley Fielding—it was after the rail was opened—to take a run down to Shrewsbury, and make a sketch or two there. He would willingly have done so—for he was much taken with what I had said about the old town—but he added thoughtfully: 'I have more on my hands than I can accomplish.' And so it was, and his days were then numbered, and he lived but for a year or two. Gentle, truthful artist! I am not likely to forget our many walks, and the pleasure we had in dwelling upon light and shade, and the undulations of the Sussex Downs, and the Miller's Tomb, and Cissbury, and the storms as they rolled

inwards, riding upon the clouds from the south-west, and the angry sunsets as the autumn hastes on to winter.

But remembrance of the departed has carried me away from the record of Shrewsbury, and from what the Meole Brook said as it entered old Pengwerne by the suburb of Coleham. But, as I said, it was a lovely sight, good for the eyes, good for the mind of a man, good for his heart.

To one who shall stand on Coleham Bridge the town is immediately before him, on what Leland calls its 'rocky hill of stone,' and close upon the embouchure of the Meole Brook is the sweep of the Severn underneath what is now called the English Bridge; for, as the old antiquary says, 'the town is strongly walled and defended by water, the which is to be counted in a manner for the town ditch.' Perhaps Leland's description of its position, quoted by Camden and all historians since, is the very best on record. It has been impressed on me from boyhood.

> Edita Pengwerni latè fastigia splendent
> Imperio cujus subjecta Poisia quondam
> Terra, altrix et bellatorum mater equorum.
> Urbs sita lunato veluti medii amnis in orbe,
> Colle tumet modico : duplici quoque ponte superbit :
> Accipiens patriâ sibi linguâ nomen ab alnis.

To the right, or to the east of Coleham Bridge, is the abbey—a grand old pile, to be spoken of in its proper place, whose precincts the Meole Brook was greatly enamoured of, embracing it almost in its course. Then presently come the council house and the infirmary, Laura's Tower and the castle being hardly perceptible. But directly in front, and in all the elegance of its beauty, arises St. Mary's spire, and westward of it, a little, St. Alkmond's—a pretty spire, too, but not to compete with St. Mary's. Close upon St. Alkmond's is the little tower of St. Julian's, and immediately in front, almost skirting the water westward, are numbers of old houses which in days gone by were frequented by the county families when, before it was the fashion to have London houses, they visited THE TOWN, as it was then called *par excellence*. Westward further is old St. Charles', scarcely visible—indeed, to get the westward view it will be necessary

to move from Coleham Bridge, and then the direct view loses its effect.

'My venerable father,' said my Talking Friend, 'never cared to speak of the ancient glory of Pengwerne, or, as it was also called by the Cymry, Y Mwythig. It was, indeed, from them, as they passed on their way, that he heard all ancient legends; which he treasured up and detailed with so much delight, comparing all that was said with the traditional lore of old Tredithic. It was from them that he heard all about Llywarc Hên, or Llywarc the Old, and of his asylum at Pengwerne with the prince Cynddylan.'

All this portion of early history, if it is not rather to be called tradition, is, to say the least, very curious; and for it I must refer the reader to the early pages of the historians of Shrewsbury. Cynddylan, Prince of Powis, may have sought refuge amid the morasses of Baschurch, but in his days it could not have gone by that name, which is Saxon; and, as Mr. Eyton says, who discredits Llywarc Hên's 'Elegy on Cynddylan,' 'Christianity and churches were unknown in Mercia till the middle of the seventh century;' to which he adds: 'The poem must be the work of a bard who might have known that Cynddylan was buried near the place which in his (the bard's) time was called Boschurch, but who did not know that the church of Bassa was non-existent in the era of Cynddylan.' The British fastness of the *Berth* is distant about a mile, and is considered by all antiquarians to be a most remarkable spot.

Of these, and like matters, my friend, the Old Oak, used to talk, and, strangely enough—there must have been some romance in his *heart of oak*—he always said 'he envied the Rea as it flowed onwards, and could see so goodly a sight as old Pengwerne Powis, Y Mwythig, or, as the Saxons called it Scrobbesbyrig. It was a noble town, and in days of trial had always done its duty.' And he would add: 'No wonder the Cymry were so fond of their snatches of song in its honour, which they would sing on their return to Prê Valdwyn.' He also believed that the Welsh had much unwritten lore—fragments, like those of Ossian, which were not manufactured—and it was a pleasure to him to hear them recite

what an Homeric scholar might call their rhapsodies. The reader who would wish to see more on this subject is referred to Sharon Turner's 'Vindication of the Ancient British Poems.' It will be found at the end of his 'History of the Anglo-Saxons,' and is quite worth perusing.

And thus the little streamlet—the Rea for the most part of its course, and then known as the Meole Brook—entered Shrewsbury at Coleham, and the Queen Sabrina said in her pride of place:

> Our ocean shall these pretty brooks devour.

'But,' said my Talking Friend, 'my venerable father always spoke as if the Rea was proud of its junction with the Severn, and he would speak of the marriage of it with the Hafren. Certainly he did not attribute pride to that noble river, though he told strange stories of its early history, derived from the Cymry, in which were intermingled, as I remember particularly, the names of Locrine and Guendolen, of Estrildis and Sabra, or, more usually, Sabrina. How my leaves as an oakling quivered at the recital, and I longed to hide myself beneath my father's branches! Sad and pitiful was it to think that Severn swift should be guilty of maiden's death!' to which he would add: 'And even if she had been proud of her stream I should not have wondered. Are not we hearts of oak proud when our growth is such as to stop the wayfarer and call for his admiration? No common river is the old Hafren of the Cymry, I trow. Before Offa, the first boundary of Mercia on this side was a line from Chester to Pengwerne Powis. Did not all the countries north and west beyond that line and the river Severn belong to Wales? No wonder, by my troth, as the Saxons of our valley used to frame their speech, if the Severn had been proud! Very apt was the name the Cymry gave to Shrewsbury—*Y Mwythig*. Pleasant was her situation, and she knew it. The sight the little Rea saw as she entered it was not easily or readily to be forgotten.'

And as I thought how in the 'Mirror for Magistrates' the Lady Sabrina, daughter of King Locrine and Elotride, is described as 'drowned by Queen Guendoline, in the year

B.C. 1064,' and how the latter, according to Grafton's 'Chronicle,' 'made a proclamation throughout the whole realm of Briteyn that the same water should be evermore called Hafrên, after the maiden's name, for so even at this day the Severn is called in the Welsh tongue;' and thus the lines seen in the marvellous history:

> So shall this floude of *Sabrine* have the name
> That men thereby may say, 'A righteous queene
> Here drowned her husband's child of concubine.'
> Therefore leave, *Sabrine*, here thy name and life,
> Let *Sabrine* waters end our mortal strife:

as I thought of these and other not unlike passages of the fabulous part of British story, it occurred to me that the reader—a Shrewsbury one, of course—should know how Milton twice tells Sabrina's story; first as the historian, admitting it to be entirely fabulous and traditional, and then as the poet in the 'Comus.'

First, then, let the historian speak, premising as a starting point, 'We find that of British affairs, from the first peopling of the island to the coming of Julius Cæsar, nothing certain, either by tradition, history, or ancient fame, hath hitherto been left us. That which we have of oldest seeming hath by the greater part of judicious antiquaries been long rejected for a modern fable.' So speaks the historian, as we should speak of early Roman story, and then, by-and-by, in its place gives the following in all its quaintness:

'Brutus, in a chosen place, builds *Troia Nova*, changed in time to *Trinovantum*, now London, and began to enact laws, *Heli* being then high priest in *Judæa*; and, having govern'd the whole isle 24 years, dy'd, and was buried in his new *Troy*. His three sons, *Locrine*, *Albanact*, and *Camber*, divide the land by consent: Locrine had the middle part, *Loëgria*; *Camber* possess'd *Cambria*, or *Wales*; *Albanact* Albania, now *Scotland*. But he in the end, by *Humber*, king of the *Hunns*, who with a fleet invaded that land, was slain in fight, and his people driv'n back into Loëgria. *Locrine* and his brother go out against *Humber*, who now, marching onward, was by them defeated, and in a river drown'd, which to this day retains his name. Among the spoils of his camp and navy were found

certain young maids, and *Estrildis*, above the rest, passing fair, the daughter of *a king in Germany*, from whence *Humber*, as he went wasting the sea coast, led her captive, whom *Locrine*, though before contracted to the daughter of *Corineas*, whose authority and power he feared. *Guendolen*, the daughter, he yields to marry, but in secret he loves the other, and ofttimes going to some private sacrifice, through vaults and passages made underground ; and seven years thus enjoying her, had by her a daughter, equally fair, whose name was *Sabra*. But when once his fear was off by the death of *Corineas*, not content with secret enjoyment, divorcing *Guendolen*, he makes *Estrildis* now his queen. *Guendolen* all in rage departs to *Cornwall*, where *Madon*, the son she had by *Locrine*, was hitherto brought up by *Corineas*, his grandfather ; and, gathering an army of her father's friends and subjects, gives battail to her husband by the river *Stare*, wherein *Locrine*, shot with an arrow, ends his life. But not so ends the fury of *Guendolen* ; for Estrildis and her daughter Sabra she throws into a river ; and, to leave a monument of revenge, proclaims that the stream be thenceforth called after the damsel's name, which by length of time is changed now to *Sabrina*, or *Severn*.'

Mr. Eyton, so often quoted as the able author of the 'Antiquities of Shropshire,' remarks on the Old Town: 'The general history of Shrewsbury has been already written, and the contradictory reproduction thereof must be either a plagiarism or a failure.' An appendix he deemed all that could be necessary. The author of these pages acquiesces in his views, and, although he will have to make many references to history in the pages that follow, he at once acknowledges his obligations ; and having here nothing to add, he thought the general reader might like to hear of old tradition, and of stories of old romance, and he has therefore given them, calling to mind how, as a boy, he knew every cranny of the Old Town as well as its gifted historian.

For the sake of 'auld lang syne' something more should be added of this ancient river, full of antique history from its bubbling source on Plinlimmon to the rage of the *Higre* at its embouchure ; this being one of 'those *egars* and flows,'

as Sir Thomas Browne speaks in his 'Vulgar Errors,' 'in some estuaries and rivers, as is observable about Trent and Humber in England,' called by Dryden 'a tide swelling over another tide, which I myself have observed in the river Trent,' in an explanatory note on his own line in the 'Threnodia Augustalis':

> But like an *eagre* rode in triumph o'er the tide.

Besides those of our own land such a commotion of the disturbed waters is there on the Ganges after it leaves the Sunderbunds. Introductory to his description of the Higre, Drayton says in his Argument to the Seventh Song of the 'Polyolbion'—that descriptive poem which all English scholars ought to read:

> The muse from Cambria comes again
> To view the forest of fair Dean;
> Sees Severn, when the Higre takes her.
> How fever-like the sickness shakes her!

The modern name of this flow is '*The Bore*,' which, with the English language, has been carried as far as Calcutta; and some years ago a very striking picture of it was given in the 'Illustrated News.' 'This violence,' says the learned Selden in his Notes on the 'Polyolbion,' 'of the water's madness, declared by the author, is so expressed in an old monkish chronicle, which, about four hundred years since, says it was called the *Higre* in English.'

The passage at length, omitting the concluding simile—not likely to be read except in such a discursive work as this—must be given in full: thus do we disinter what else might be lost to modern readers. It is the commencement of the Seventh Song, and may be skipped if found to be dull:

> High matters call our muse, inviting her to see
> As well the lower lands as those where lately she
> The Cambrian mountains clomb, and (looking from aloft)
> Surveyed coy Severn's course. But now to shores more soft
> She shapes her prosperous sail, and in this lofty song
> The Herefordian floods invites with her along,
> That, fraught from plenteous Powse, with their superfluous waste,
> Manure the batful March, until they be embraced
> In Sabrin's sovereign arms; with whose tumultuous waves,
> Shut up in narrower bounds, the *Higre* wildly raves,

And frights the straggling flocks the neighbouring shores to fly.
Afar as from the main it comes with hideous cry,
And on the angry front the curlèd foam doth bring,
The billows 'gainst the banks when fiercely it doth fling;
Hurls up the slimy ooze, and makes the scaly brood
Leap madding to the land, affrighted from the flood;
O'erturns the toiling barge, whose steersman doth not lanch
And thrust the furrowing beak into her ireful panch.

And thus much for the Severn and its waters. And I was meditating on how I had known, as from my boyhood, its depths and its fords, when I heard the rustling once more of my Talking Friend's leaves, and he seemed to say, with a suppressed sigh, as though his heart of oak was touched—

'It was in a little coracle that Eddred of our valley passed under the Coleham Bridge into the Severn—the coracle he had used on the Rea since he was a child. It was that sort of a boat which Hu Gadern instructed the Cymry to make with wicker and skins of animals. You know the sort of craft well, and used it dexterously as a boy. Poor Eddred!'

Seeing that thereby hung a tale I waited a while in silence, as it is best to let emotion take its course, and by degrees the rustling of the leaves ceased, and there was only that soft, silent quivering of the foliage which may be observed in the high noon of a midsummer's day, or just before the thunder-cloud bursts. And then I knew that it was my time—we all learn by experience—

Quæ mollissima fandi
Tempora, quis rebus dexter modus;

so I addressed my Talking Friend, and asked him who Eddred was; for I never recollected, in all our conversations, that he had ever mentioned his name.

All at once there was again a great commotion in the highest branches of the Old Oak, and the leaves of his ancient stock shook violently. His heart of oak was moved—moved as the strong are moved, and whose emotion can never be forgotten—and thus it was I gathered

The Story of Eddred and his Coracle.

'Eddred was for years the pet of the valley of the Rea, in its course from Hanwood to Shrewsbury: not a creature but

loved to see his face and to hear his voice. And yet Eddred was hardly like the rest of the people. It could not quite be said that he was deficient, and yet he was not wise—wise, that is, as the people express themselves on such points. As they said, in our Saxon idiom, "It was not all there." I never, of course, recollect him myself, but my venerable father's attachment to his memory seemed to have passed on to me, and as *he* was always moved when Eddred's name was mentioned, so am *I*. It is an hereditary qualm felt by me more than the roughest gale from Habberley Hole. I quite recollect my father's delight—still vivid in his years—when he recounted to me how he became a great man at Byzantium, or, as you now call it, Constantinople, where, as the priest of Pontesbury reported it, he had joined the Varangian Guard.'

'The Varangian Guard!' I interposed. 'How could Eddred have escaped from the banks of the Rea and the valley of Hanwood to the ἄπειρος Ἑλλήσποντος—excuse my musty Greek: the boundless Hellespont, let it be called—and there have joined those whom the Greeks of Constantinople, brave as the Varangians were, only looked upon as barbarians of the imperial body-guard, fitted only, like faithful dogs, to watch and to tend those born in the purple?'

'That,' said my Talking Friend, 'is a part of the story; and, though I am not a Dodonean oak, yet have I heard you and your brothers talk of the Greeks so long—not to mention your uncle John, who died in the year of his proctorship at Cambridge, half a century ago now—that I know all about the Dardanelles, and the Sea of Marmora, and the Bosphorus; and the Varangian Guard, too. Your uncle John was a learned man, and he would tell how the *Warengangi* had a name in Italy and Sicily before they were ever heard of at Constantinople. But why refer to anyone rather than to one who may almost be called our own countryman, Ordericus Vitalis, who tells us all about it?'

And the Old Oak was silent, and all at once, as in a dream, the vivid account of Gibbon flashed across my mind. The general reader will pass by so long an extract; the lover of history will read it every word, and endeavour to connect the Varangian Guard with his native land.

'The vast and, as it is said, the populous regions of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway were crowded with independent chieftains and desperate adventurers, who sighed in the laziness of peace and smiled in the agonies of death. Piracy was the exercise, the trade, the glory, and the virtue of the Scandinavian youth. Impatient of a bleak climate and narrow limits, they started from the banquet, grasped their arms, sounded their horns, ascended their vessels, and explored every coast that promised either sport or settlement. The Baltic was the first scene of their naval achievements: they visited the eastern shores, the silent residence of Fennic and Sclavonian tribes; and the primitive Russians of the Lake Ladoga paid a tribute—the skins of white squirrels—to these strangers, whom they saluted with the title of *Varangians*, or Corsairs. Their superiority in arms, discipline, and renown commanded the fear and the reverence of the natives. In their wars against the more inland savages the Varangians condescended to serve as friends and auxiliaries, and gradually, by choice or conquest, obtained the dominion of a people whom they were qualified to protect. Their tyranny was expelled, their valour was again recalled, till at length Ruric, a Scandinavian chief, became the father of a dynasty which reigned above seven hundred years. His brothers extended his influence: the example of service and usurpation was imitated by his companions in the southern provinces of Russia, and their establishments, by the usual methods of war and assassination, were cemented into the fabric of a powerful monarchy.

'As long as the descendants of Ruric were considered as aliens and conquerors, they ruled by the sword of the Varangians, distributed estates and subjects to their faithful captains, and supplied their numbers with fresh streams of adventurers from the Baltic coast. But when the Scandinavian chiefs had struck a deep and permanent root into the soil, they mingled with the Russians in blood, religion, and language, and the first Waladimir had the merit of delivering his country from these foreign mercenaries. They had seated him on the throne; his riches were insufficient to satisfy their demands; but they listened to his pleasing advice—that they

should seek, not a more grateful, but a more wealthy master; that they should embark for Greece, where, instead of the skins of squirrels, silk and gold would be the recompense of their service. At the same time the Russian prince admonished his Byzantine ally to disperse and employ, to recompense and restrain, these impetuous children of the north. Contemporary writers have recorded the introduction, name, and character of the *Varangians*: each day they rose in confidence and esteem. The whole body were assembled at Constantinople to perform the duty of guards, and their strength was recruited by a numerous band of their countrymen from the island of Thule—on this occasion the vague appellation of Thule is applied to England—and the new Varangians were a colony of English and Danes who fled from the yoke of the Norman conqueror. The habits of pilgrimage and piracy had approximated the countries of the earth. These exiles were entertained in the Byzantine court, and they preserved, till the last age of the empire, the inheritance of spotless loyalty and the use of the Danish or English tongue. With their broad and double-edged battle-axes on their shoulders, they attended the Greek emperor to the temple, the senate, and the hippodrome; he slept and feasted under their trusty guard; and the keys of the palace, the treasury, and the capital were held by the firm and faithful hands of the Varangians.'

Readers of history will all admit this to be a striking passage; and readers of romance will not, as before hinted, forget Sir Walter Scott's 'Robert of Paris.' In his account of the Varangians that master's hand had not lost its cunning, and it may be turned to and read with unflagging interest.

Meanwhile the leaves of the Old Oak shook again—I am under the impression that some of them fell off, stained and weakened, no doubt, by the late May frosts—and thus he spoke, whilst I listened anxiously:

'Yes; my aged father told me that Eddred became a great man in the Varangian Guard, and joined in many a fight at Constantinople and elsewhere. His double-edged battle-axe and his shield of steel were as well known as the best of our hearts of oak in the *wicks* and the *fiords* of the north. If

our people were Vikingur, he needed not to be ashamed when he was called EDDRED THE VARANGIAN.'

Whereupon I called to mind Sir Walter's description in 'The Count of Paris,' who must have handled such an axe in some ancient armoury :

'A weapon which seemed more particularly adapted to the young barbarian's size, and incapable of being used by a man of less formidable limbs and sinews, was a battle-axe, the firm iron-guarded staff of which was formed of tough elm strongly inlaid and defended with brass ; while many a plate and ring were indented in the handle to hold the wood and steel parts together. The axe itself was composed of two blades, turning different ways, with a sharp steel spike projecting from between them. The steel part, both spike and blade, was burnished as bright as a mirror ; and, though its ponderous size must have been burdensome to one weaker than himself, yet the young soldier carried it as carelessly along as if it were but a feather's weight. It was, indeed, a skilfully constructed weapon, so well balanced that it was much lighter in striking and in recovery than he who saw it in the hands of another could easily have believed.'

But my brown study—the Varangian, had he been a Dane, instead of a Saxon, might have used his country's proverb, and have said, '*Han er i Taajet*,' i.e. he is in a fog—was too much for the Old Oak, and there was a violent shaking of his boughs, as well as of his leaves, and he continued :

'"Eddred," my venerable father used to say, and he never varied on this head, "was born at Panson, just above Hanwood ; and from the time he could crawl down to the Rea he never hardly left it, and when lost was to be found there at all hours. As a child he paddled on the shallows, and, having no better craft, made him little boats of *caddis-sticks*, where the grub of the May-fly lodged, and laughed till the banks rang again when he could get one to float. Such was his childhood, and, except in this his passion for the river, he seemed to have no other strong attachment. Always dutiful, neither home, nor father, nor mother, nor brothers, nor sisters, strange as it may appear in a dutiful child, could be said to have great hold of him. He was, indeed, a very wayward child

'"Strangely enough, as he advanced towards boyhood, his tastes scarcely altered. The water-sprite seemed to have possessed him. He would talk to the waters as they flowed silently, or with ripple soft as silence, and the waters seemed to talk to him; at all events there was a melody in their flow which rapt him out of himself. Of all his favourite spots the ford, just below the old Saxon church at Hanwood, with its venerable yew trees, was his greatest delight: there he would sit for hours, and the fishes as they swam from pool to pool across that ford were not more mute than he.

'"Meanwhile his parents were at their wits' end. They could devise no occupation for him; apparently he could do nothing as other boys could. And yet," said my aged father, "he was not disobedient, but, as it would seem, capricious. Even what he would that he did not, except it concerned the waters; and in matters of everyday life he was just what his brothers called him, 'Eddred the Unready.'

'"Seeing that nothing could be done with him, and that, as a north countryman once said in passing under my branches, '*A' was nae there*,' his parents, who loved him, as wayward and eccentric children are sure to be loved, left him pretty much to himself, there being no mischief in him, and no inclination whatever to do what might bring them into trouble.

'"And so he still kept to his favourite stream, and, having heard of the coracles on the Severn, he went to see one at Emstrey Ford; and, as soon as he returned, determined to make one for himself. But he had to wait, for Martinmas, when the only beeves for winter consumption were killed, was many months off, and coracles were made of raw hides and wicker work. However, he was not idle; he got together the broad willow spaths, and bent them, as willows will bend, into proper shape; and, thinking to add strength to his own particular craft—which would have to contend with what were called the *stouls* of the narrow stream—he prepared aspen laths also for *cross-ties*. And he said laughingly, 'When the time comes I'll start a better coracle than ould Crwdrws of Emstrey.' And the time came, and the beeves were killed, and their hides were prepared and suppled; and

no happier youth than Eddred was ever seen on the Rea's side.

'"And two years more," said my venerable father, "passed over, and all this while his chief occupation was on the stream of the Rea; and, as was said, of all places he loved best, none was to be compared with Hanwood, so lovely and so beautiful was that vale. Panson was just above, and down he came to the stream as regularly as the day broke. In those days fishermen were scarce, and fish, comparatively, little heeded. The consequence was, that, having the run of the stream, he furnished the home with abundance; and, when other food was scarce, it was the common household word, 'Eddred will provide.' In truth, almost his only rivals were the otters, the herons, and the kingfisher—that bird of beautiful plumage with which, even till late years, our stream abounded." You can very well recollect,' said my Talking Friend, turning pleasantly to me, 'how, when you were a child, they were hung up in the kitchen chimney to show which way the wind blew, or was likely to blow.

'"Many a time," my venerable father said, "Eddred used to come up to Meole, about the end of February and the beginning of March, to gather the winter oak-galls which still remained on my branches. You know how they will do so, and have often found the tawny, brownish-white grub in their centres. Eddred had learnt that, when mixed with honey, they were a great temptation to shoal and scaly fish; and he knew from experience that it was just one of those baits which an old leathern-mouthed chub could never resist. Nowadays I have heard you and your brothers say that *Cocculus Indicus*, mixed with gin and sugar, is the thing; but, according to my feelings as an oak, it is very unfair play.

'"Oftentimes Eddred was away from his home for several days, and his absence created no uneasiness whatever. He had dropped down the Rea, or perhaps had made his way upwards; sometimes paddling, sometimes carrying his coracle on his shoulders with the paddle, as was the custom, and is so still; and he would stop here, and he would stop there, going in and out, and returning at will; for all were kind to Eddred and knew his ways. But, on the last occasion of his absence,

he had been on his wanderings for a fortnight—longer than usual, his parents said—and the fortnight rose into three weeks, and then they became anxious, if not alarmed, and instituted a search for the wayward boy through the trappers and the hunters, who were always on the move through the scrub. But it was all in vain, and for a long time they could get no real information ; all they could make out was, that he had passed under Coleham Bridge in his coracle, and had entered the Severn that way.

'"For many and many a day they hoped he might return ; but many and many a day passed, and days became years, and all hope of ever seeing poor Eddred again died away ; and it was one of the sorrows his parents carried with them to their graves. And, although sometimes they said, 'He should not have left us so,' yet would they make allowances for him, as affectionate parents will : 'It was all his waywardness—he had never been undutiful.'" As for my venerable father—so fond had he become of the wandering laddie—he was quite put out ; and the people on the Rea side said that the honey-dew, the residue of the aphis and the food of the humble bee, which fell from his leaves when summer days were long, were tears for his memory. Indeed, he was always moved, as I said, on the mention of the youth. I can recollect all this quite well—as well as if it were yesterday—so clear and unpretendingly pathetic was my father's narrative.

'"Still further inquiries, according to the inquiries of those early days, were made, but little information was it that could be got at. The only thing that transpired was, that a Gloucester *float* (a very common name for the rough-compacted barges of the Severn in ancient times) was at Scrobbesbyrig about that period, and that it had carried off several youths for Bristol, and, as was reported, for the wars."

'I am not well versed in history,' continued my Talking Friend ; 'the little I know is of *naval* history, to which all hearts of oak have been contributors. But the priest that was at Hanwood in those days told my venerable father (how he had learnt it on the banks of the Rea, I know not ; but scholarship is a fine thing) that about this time there was a great commotion in the northern nations, and that it

was the cause of many a youth's leaving the land of his nativity.'

And here I must stop to remark that all this is corroborated by the extracts above given—so that the priest of Hanwood was right—and which are sufficiently explanatory when the following extract from 'Count Robert of Paris' is appended to them, in which, by the way, Gibbon's remarks are somewhat modified :

'At a later period of the empire it began to be more difficult for the emperors to obtain recruits for their favourite and selected corps, the northern nations having now, in a great measure, laid aside their piratical and roving habits, which had driven their ancestors from the Straits of Elsinore to those of Sestos and Abydos. The corps of the Varangians must, therefore, have died out, or have been filled up with less worthy materials, had not the conquests made by the Normans in the far distant west sent to the aid of Comnenus a large body of the dispossessed inhabitants of the islands of Britain, and particularly of England, who furnished recruits to his chosen body-guard. These were, in fact, Anglo-Saxons ; but in the confused idea of geography received at the court of Constantinople they were naturally enough called Anglo-Danes, as their native country was confounded with the Thule of the ancients ; by which expression the archipelago of Zetland and Orkney is properly to be understood, though, according to the notions of the Greeks, it comprised either Denmark or Britain. The emigrants, however, spoke a language not very dissimilar to that of the original Varangians, and adopted the name more readily that it seemed to remind them of their unhappy fate, the appellation being in one sense capable of being interpreted as exiles. Excepting one or two chief commanders, whom the emperor judged worthy of such high trust, the Varangians were officered by men of their own nation ; and with so many privileges—being joined by many of their countrymen from time to time, as the crusades, pilgrimages, or discontent at home drove fresh supplies of the Anglo-Saxons, or Anglo-Danes, to the east—the Varangians subsisted in strength to the last days of the Greek Empire, retaining their native language, along with

the unblemished loyalty and unabated martial spirit which characterised their fathers.'

This account of the Varangian Guard is strictly historical, and might be proved by reference to the Byzantine historians, most of whom, and also Villehardouin's account of the taking of the city of Constantinople by the Franks and Venetians, make repeated mention of this celebrated and singular body of Englishmen, forming a mercenary guard-attendant on the person of the Greek emperors.

From this point I must throw the disjointed narrative of my Talking Friend into a more regular and consecutive form.

It turned out, twenty years after, that Eddred had joined this celebrated guard. It could not have been, however (as I make it out), in the days of Alexius Comnenus, or of his more celebrated daughter, Anna Comnena—this would have been about A.D. 1080—but in the time of the Third Crusade, which dates from A.D. 1188, or close upon a hundred years later; it was, in fact, in the latter years of our Richard I. that the only intimation of Eddred that ever reached the banks of the Rea was brought by a palmer bound for Wenlock Abbey, and, as was usual, it came through the abbot of Shrewsbury; for the abbey, as we have seen before, was close upon the Meole Brook, which is the same as the Rea.

As may be anticipated from what has been before hinted, from Bristol Eddred joined some northern rovers, being in his own nature as adventuresome as they. But, from the palmer's reports, they were not bound for the north—as Scandinavia was then more generally called—but for some port where now are situated St. Malo or St. Brienne; and it was there that Eddred fell in with some warriors who could talk of nothing but of the Holy City, and of the Crusades, and of the cruelties practised on Christians by Turk or Saracen.

It was just the thing, of all others, to excite his sympathies; and that latent ambition, unknown heretofore to himself, but which was, perhaps, the turning-point in his whole nature, flared up—never, certainly, imagined by his parents on the Rea side—just possibly discovered on his entrance into the Severn in his coracle at Coleham Bridge, but unmistakably developed at once on his joining the rangers at Bristol.

'The palmer—one from Compostella, known by his staff and scallop shell—had not much to say as to how he reached Constantinople,' said the abbot of Shrewsbury to the priest of Hanwood; 'but he had much to say, and did say much in our parlour, of his bearing where Crusaders died and suffered. He was a man of note, depend upon it, and they of Wenlock Abbey might receive him well.'

It appeared simply from the palmer's narrative that the youth was reported as one of bold, intrepid front; also, although, till urged on, perhaps a person of some nervousness and indecision, yet, as is often the case, when screwed up to the daring point, one of most resolute deportment. With this character it is not surprising that he fell in with others of Norman and Bretagne blood; passed through France, as at that time men did, and now do again, by way of Marseilles; joined Genoese and other coasters there; and then became denizened, as it were, to the Mediterranean and Greek seas, and acquainted with Ragusan argosies. The palmer could not inform the abbot of Shrewsbury much about his several habitations, but he said that before he reached Constantinople he was familiar with the coastings of the Black Sea from Eupatoria, in the Crimea, to Sinope, in Anatolia; or, at least, what we call those places now; moderately known then through the merchants of Genoa, who left many names behind them, well known now since the fall of Sebastopol. Possibly he was what, since the conquests on the Spanish Main, we might call by the name of a buccaneer. Certainly his companions, at times, were rovers or corsairs; for, although he started with those from France in whose mouths was war to the knife against the Turk, they were by no means particular.

But, whatever he was, when he reached Constantinople, men of pith and bearing were wanted there, as we have seen, to replenish the imperial guard; and within a little while he was numbered with the Varangians—one, of all others, to give rise to a work called '*Gesta Dei per Francos*.'

It was here, at Constantinople, that his love of the 'Sweet Waters,' as an adjoining portion of the Bosphorus was even then called, combined with his military prowess, tended to

attract the notice of all observers. When on the Dardanelles it was notorious that, swift as the current is (swifter than that of the Sound between Elsinore and Helsingborg), he could stem, in any small boat of the country, the waters between Sestos and Abydos. And then, when he arrived there, among all the watermen of the Bright City, there was no such waterman as he. The Turk awoke to wonderment at his feats. What he had learnt in his coracle on the Rea was not thrown away when he had to contend with the current of the Bosphorus.

But it was about the court that within a year or two he was best known and esteemed; and as whatever he was commanded to do he did, and never admitted difficulties to thwart him, he rose step by step, became the general favourite of his employer, was trusted on all occasions, and took his place, on the death of a strong-willed man, something like himself, as chief captain of the Varangian Guard. 'They had a name for his post and office,' said my Talking Friend, 'which, if I recollect my venerable father's account, was *protostrategos*, in pronouncing which all his lower boughs shook, so contrary was it to Saxon speech; but, at this distance of time, I may be mistaken on such a point. Many, however, were the disturbances he was called in to quell, and great was his soldierly repute.'

About this time it was, as the abbot picked up from the palmer, that the report of what we call 'The Third Crusade' reached him in more definite terms, and without the romantic fame of our lion-hearted king, who had now set forth 'well stored with men, the bones, and quickly got money, the sinews, of war;' but, as we well know now, to the great damage of the nation, not to mention the cruelties practised on the poor money-making Jew. But 'to the relief of the Holy City and the Holy Sepulchre' was the cry; and, although many flocked to the standard of the Cross with mixed motives, the historian's words are these: 'In no age could that spot be visited without emotion, which was believed to be the scene of the last sufferings of the Christian Legislator. Abstracted from all consideration of His divine character, biography does not contain a narrative more interesting to the

human sympathies than His history, from His last entrance into Jerusalem to the hour when agitated Nature announced that its Redeemer had expired. It was not the feeling of a rude age merely; if the tomb and the country were as accessible as the Capitol and vicinity of Rome, the stream of concourse would have never ceased to flow while Christianity survived in Europe. In one age it might have been called a pilgrimage, in another a journey; at one time devotion might have actuated, at another curiosity. But the human heart must be unstrung, and the human reason unseated, before the desire of visiting the places immortalised by the affecting writings of the evangelists could cease to interest a Christian population.'

And such were the feelings that swayed and influenced the mind of Eddred. That strange, wayward disposition of his was moulded into character which had a strong, marked dash of religion in it, as well as of romance. And much as he was attached to the court, and to his old friends there, and to the waters of the Bosphorus which flowed by so swiftly, he flung himself at once into the movement, and obtained a hardly extorted permission to join himself to the Saxon-English, or Anglo-Saxon, who had crossed over into Roum and Anatolia.

One thing, above all others, the palmer said, moved him to take part in the Crusade, and to add to that military host which, as the former ones, 'was like a cloth of many colours and more seams, which seams, though they were curiously drawn up for the present, yet after long wearing began to be seen, and at last broke out into open rents.' So writes old Fuller of the First Crusade.

'Curiously enough,' the palmer informed the abbot, and so, through the priest of Hanwood, it got bruited beneath the branches of the Old Oak, 'a bold-bearing Saxon had lately come to the court, and his speech betrayed him to be of the same district as Eddred. Very soon they became more nearly acquainted, and the stranger, under Eddred's command in the Varangian Guard, to which he had joined himself, communicated to him that he was a soldier of fortune, and that his native place was Wenlock—a name which at

once attracted the attention of Eddred, who had many a time and oft heard of the name of Wenlock Edge, and had seen it, if not from Panson, yet from the Hanwood Banks. The soldier's name, my father said, was HERLUIN;' which, by the by, is Danish, and points to the intermixture of Danes and English, or Anglo-Saxons, in the Varangian Guard, which has often been alluded to.

Eddred, who, when at home, was thought to be dull, and only given up to his coracle and the stream, had often heard the priest of Hanwood, above alluded to, speak of the Holy Sepulchre and of the cruelties of the Turks; and all this now flashed across his mind, and with it the remembrance of his home—for then, of all others, is the time when home comes most home to us, if danger is hard at hand, or one is on the eve of some great endeavour, or if the host is assembled and marshalled, and men shout for the battle.

The palmer could not tell the abbot of Shrewsbury how Eddred and his companion contrived to loose themselves from the emperor's guard at Constantinople—a hard matter, as we have seen—or how, which was still stranger, he could have been accompanied by the lovely Scira, a maiden of the Greek islands, who, in all his fights—and they were many—hardly ever left his side. All that he ever heard was, that she adopted man's attire, and was an orphan companion in arms with Eddred and Herluin.

Nothing daunted by the ill reports of the two former Crusades, the two brothers in arms were resolutely determined to meet all dangers; and the palmer told, as he struck his pilgrim's staff on the ground, how these Varangians and their well-girded page were heard of at Smyrna, and Rhodes, and Cyprus; at Antioch and at Aleppo.

At the mention of Aleppo I drew a long breath, and, on my Talking Friend's expressing his surprise, I told him 'that it called to my mind the many misfortunes of the people who had joined in this vast horde of adventurers, and their consequent demoralisation, however much, in unforeseen ways, they may have helped on the progress of knowledge and tended to further civilisation.' And I called to mind once more the thoughtful historian's words:

'Although the first Crusaders, under the guidance of Godfrey, had trampled down the Turkish kingdoms of Roum and Syria, defeated the Soldan of Egypt, and captured the sacred city, yet, with these exploits, their substantial triumphs ceased. Their strength was consumed in their exertions; and the new adventurers who frequently arrived only enabled the kings of Jerusalem to add a few maritime towns to their puny dominion. In the meantime the Turks recovered from their first disasters and their panic. New Turkish kingdoms were planted at Iconium, Aleppo, and Damascus. The Islam population of Persia, Egypt, and Arabia again assisted; and their fierce hostilities, though occasionally suspended by their own bands, yet sometimes defeated, and always distressed, the Christian princes.'

But to pass on, and to put the narrative together as the palmer reported it, and as the Old Oak had picked it up by the way.

'"Eddred and Herluin had heard with bated breath all the marvellous stories of Sanguin of Moussoul, of his sons Seiffeddin and Noureddin, and of their nephew Saladin, who, at this time, was the observed of all observers—his very name, indeed, implying the pith and essence of his faith.

'"Passing over his Egyptian successes, we find him victor in the great battle of Hittyn, or Tiberias—that heavy blow to the Christians—after which Sidon, Acre, Berytus, and Ascalon fell into his power, giving him, in 1187, the mastership of Jerusalem; while he threatened that he would extirpate Christianity from the earth and raise the Crescent above the Cross throughout the heart of Europe, and defy the powers of the West; or, as he called it, *El Garb*—a name applied to the eastern portion of Africa by Orientals long before the Moors introduced it into Algarve.

'"On hearing this threat it was that Richard, our lion-hearted king, who had more romantic daring in his nature than the pure faith of a Christian man, determined to undertake a Crusade; and, having received his wallet and his staff from the Archbishop of Tours, started on his way, as old Fuller puts it, from Hoveden. 'At Tours he took his pilgrim's

stick and staff from the archbishop. His staff at the same time casually brake in pieces, which some (whose dexterity lay in sinister interpreting all accidents) construed a token of ill-success. Likewise when he and the French king, with their trains, passed over the bridge of Lyons on the fall of the bridge this conceit was built: that there would be a falling out betwixt these two kings, which accordingly came to pass, their intercourse and familiarity breeding hatred and discontent between them.' " '

How the fleet sailed from Dartmouth to Lisbon, the interest taken in Silves—the last Christian city of Algarve—the passing of the Straits of Gibraltar, the arrival at Marseilles, the story of the Schola Salernitana, Richard's abode at Messina, and the alarm he created in the mind of Tancred, King of Sicily, who, on its removal, presented gifts—amongst others, it is said, Arthur's celebrated sword Excalibur—these, and all other points, are to be found in history, and must be looked for there. But it was at Cyprus where the Eddred of our story again comes into prominent notice.

As is well known to all readers of this Crusade, the king of Cyprus would not receive Berengaria of Navarre and Richard's sister, and would not allow them safely to make good their landing. This entirely infuriated the lion's heart and he determined to force him into submission, and did so by advancing with his galleys and with his bowmen. But, though driven off, the Cypriotes rallied by night, and it was upon this occasion that Eddred and his friend Herluin became conspicuous.

' " To find where the foe lay secured, it was necessary to wind up a little creek stilly and stealthily, and Richard's voice was heard calling for some adventurous spy. Eddred at once stepped forth, and with him Herluin. It was then evening, and no time was to be lost. 'Canst thou find thy way up the creek?' said the king, his eyes flashing fire, and in emotion, as was their wont.

' " 'Yes,' was the undaunted reply of the Varangian, who had never even flinched at Greek fire; 'but, my liege, I must put my own boat together.'

'"'Sblood and zounds! put thine own boat together,' roared the king. 'Thou'rt crazed, sturdy and stalwart as thou art, Varangian!'

'"'Short time, O king! will suffice for that, and give room to prove me sane,' said Eddred respectfully but firmly. 'The bullocks' hides just slain to feed the troops and a few supple laths, with our page's nice hand to join them, and Herluin's to grease the thongs, a cross board, and a paddle, is all that is wanted. Give me an hour, my liege, and I am ready to start. If all goes right, less than that may do. Our craft, after all, is but the old bulls' hides of Spain, and the fisher boat of my native stream, the Rea.'

'"'Enough!' shouted the king, 'for thou hast never been known to lie or to deceive, and hitherto hast been even better than thy word in my employ. See to it, however, or off goes thy head, and, as these Turks say, thy shadow may be less; and perhaps the head also of that dark-haired youth, who seems to be thy double, for he never quits thy side. One in my position with a score such assistants might defy Saladin—or the devil. In this world I begin to find out there's nothing like trustiness and faithfulness.'

'"And within the time the boat, or coracle—for it was nothing more—was roughly put together, and Eddred, with greased and muffled paddle, swept up the stream, discovered the encamping foes, and returned. Richard at once rushed forth, caught them sleeping, and slaughtered them ruthlessly. Of the king of Cyprus' submission, and of his traditional fetters of gold and silver, our story calls us not to speak, but of Eddred's fortune. I may, however, transcribe old Fuller's words as a connecting link, who thus reports of Isaac, or Carrac, King of Cyprus: 'Some falsely conceived him a pagan, and his faith is suspected because his charity was so bad, killing the English that landed there, not having so much manners as to pity a woman, and to suffer the sea-sick Berengaria to come on shore. But King Richard speedily overran the island, honoured Isaac with the magnificent captivity of silver fetters, yet giving his daughter liberty and princely usage. And because Cyprus by antiquity was celebrated as the seat of Venus, that so it might prove to

him, in the joyous month of May he solemnly took to wife his beloved Lady Berengaria.'

'"It was after the night feat with his coracle that Eddred the Varangian and his friend Herluin more especially attracted the attention of the king, and he took to them the more because, like himself, they were stalwart, bold-hearted fellows.

'"One day—the marriage with the Lady Berengaria was over, and the island had fully submitted, and Richard was about to depart on his voyage for Acre—in that wild mood which attached to his race, where impulse was mostly the mainspring of action, he called Eddred to his presence and said, abruptly enough, as was the wont of a Plantagenet, whose blood was always boiling in their veins:

'"'Youth! thou didst me some service that night in the island, and, as we are about to leave Cyprus, I should much like thee and thy yoke-fellow Herluin, to be close to my side, for I have to meet many dangers; and as I know I am headstrong, I am never likely to turn back for odds. What sayest thou, Varangian?'

'"'A soldier's thanks, royal master!' and Eddred bowed the knee and did the homage the Normans loved, but which the Saxons were chary in giving. Richard knew the feeling, and the romance of his nature at once came to his aid, when he said with a rough grace, 'Rise, Eddred, rise! Thy trustiness needs no such bending of the knee as that. Let others do that homage of whom we are not so sure. I would be answerable with my head for thine and Herluin's aid when the fray is the thickest.'

'"'One boon granted, my liege, and I will follow thee through fire and water—and I know what perils by water *are*, and what Greek fire *is*, too. May I speak out in my own plain Saxon tongue, which, though a Norman, thou knowest well?'

'"'Out with it, and be quick!' roared the lion-hearted monarch. 'I hate palaver as much as the people hate that fire the Turks and Saracens stole from the Greeks to plague us with. It's a cursed ingredient of the devil, that *feu grégeois*.'

'"'Then, my liege,' said the Varangian, 'do not start at

the discovery I am about to make, but pardon it; and let me entreat the Lady Berengaria, who is kind and affable to us, to befriend *me*. The youth—as he seems—who helped to patch up the boat in haste is no youth at all, but an orphan maiden whom I wrenched out of the hands of the slave-dealers. Her real name is Scira, from one of the Greek islands—I know not which, but I think from Scio. From a child she has followed my fortunes, and has been to me as a daughter, pure and chaste as the glorious sun of these lands now shining above our heads. Knowing no other parents, I have been to her, in my rough way, both father and mother, and if any evil overtakes me by the way Herluin has promised to protect and shield her; but could I consign her to Queen Berengaria's tender hands methinks my spear would be lighter and my battle-axe, in case of need, would fall the heavier. To Herluin, also, I know it would be a great relief: the hearty fellow is deeply attached to me, and constantly puzzled about Scira. My liege, you are in possession of my only secret. It is better soldiers should have none. If you can help me, do; and then—my life for King Richard's any day!'

'"'By the Holy City, and by the Holy Sepulchre!' blurted out the king, with all the fiery emotion of the Plantagenets. 'My eye has often rested on that youth—for such I thought her—and I wondered what brought him into such rough-mailed company. Fool that I was not to see at once that it was a Greek girl's blood that ran in her veins, so keen-cut and clearly pencilled were her features; and when she blushed it was not as we hard sons of the north do, but as an Oriental and an Easterling. On the word of a king, Varangian, she shall be looked to well. I will confer with our queen at once.'

'"'On the word of a subject, my liege, thou shalt be well looked to also! It must be a cunning swordsman—to say nothing of my trusty battle-axe—that shall ever reach thy helm, however thick the fight, and the Damasco blade must be a keen one that shall meet with mine and Herluin's.'

'"'See me again at sundown,' said the king; and he went in search of the Lady Berengaria and her maidens, and told her all.

'"'A strange story, by St. Iago of Compostella!' said the beauty of Navarre. 'Strange that the Varangian should have intrusted Cœur de Lion with it. But who better than Berengaria knows that the lion can be a lamb? Fain would I see this Greek damsel, but my womanish curiosity prompts me to see the youth first. Good my lord; do you think you could inveigle him into our presence? Ours, you know, is no harem.'

'"'Berengaria's wish is a command,' replied the king, who was evidently tickled at being called a lamb, for no one else but Berengaria had ever applied that term to a Plantagenet. And so the youth was summoned, and came.

'" The instant Berengaria saw him in his simple but beautiful Greek dress, white as the night-flowering alanzo in the neglected cinnamon gardens of Colombo, she laughed out loud, as some unsophisticated Spanish girl would to the clack of her castanets, and said to her maidens: 'The pet of our whole coterie; the youth we had all fallen in love with; the youth of the dark, fiery eyes, and long eyelashes, and pure Grecian face, so statue-like, and yet so full of life!' And at once she took him by the hand and kissed both his cheeks, and said with pleasurable emotion, which was not pity: 'Youth no more, but damsel fit to adorn a court, for bravery and for beauty, tell the Varangian I accept the charge. My home is thy home, my fortunes are thy fortunes: whatever my wanderings, wander with me; wake with me when I wake, rest with me when I rest. But, maiden, hast thou well weighed the cost? Art thou well prepared? Canst thou part with thine adopted father?' and her tears flowed like the latter rain. And Berengaria rose with all her native grace and dignity and said—her own tears flowing meanwhile—'No time for weeping now; it is the time of action. Art thou prepared, or art thou not? Speak outright, child. We must not both be women only in the presence of Richard of England, or the lamb of to-day will be the fiercer lion of to-morrow and despise our tears. Speak, child, speak!'"'

So spake Berengaria with her native fire, and the palmer said to the abbot of Shrewsbury, 'The expression of her face was angelic.'

'"Meanwhile Scira, who had sunk down before her with something like the prostration of an Oriental, arose shaking and trembling: 'LADY!—they tell me that term, of all others, is the one by which the wife of the Lion-hearted should be addressed—Lady!' and she bowed again with a reverence which none but an Oriental is equal to, 'with mine own good will never would I part with my foster-father; nothing but death should have parted him and me. But whatever is the wish of his heart, that, if not the wish, is the bounden duty of mine. His love to me has been more than the love of women. I was but an infant slave when he rescued me from I know not what degradation and misery—and these eyes have seen much—and ever since then I have been to him as a child. The only deception in his whole life was his insisting, if I would not leave him—leave *him*!—that I should assume my present dress. He seemed to think that it would be a protection to me. And, noble mistress, I have done in foray and in camp as much as, perhaps more than, a better educated page could have done—more, if you will allow me to say so (for I have witnessed their faithlessness), than any spoiled or petted Moorish *todito*. Only Herluin the Saxon—the faithful Herluin—was cognizant of my humiliating disguise; for I felt it as a Grecian maiden would (and he but lately), but never was man more worthy of his trust.'

'"From this day forth Scira was the constant attendant on Berengaria—and, stranger still, none of her maidens envied her—and she took to her and loved her with her woman's heart as much as the Varangian had done before her. Even more, when the wild fit of the Plantagenet was on him, it was the timid Scira that best knew how to help the queen, and Richard's savage wildness would quail before her, and he would calm down into that softness which always followed his violent paroxysms of rage. When his tempestuous gusts were at the highest the mere name of Scira was as the music of the minstrel—that music which he loved well to the last.

'"After this Eddred and Herluin were the constant close companions of Richard. They were with him when that fierce attack was made on the well-known Saracen ship, and

were loud as Richard in encouraging the English vessels, though they were horrified at his threats thundered forth with the monomania of his race; they were with him at Acre when Saladin was his close antagonist, and accompanied him to the walls, when sick, on his silken mattress (Berengaria's and Scira's care, no doubt), and helped him to his own balista; they were with him in that fierce and fell encounter on the march to Ascalon, when Richard's sword (was it really Excalibur?) wrought wonders; and they were the first every night to lift up their voices when the cry of 'HELP TO THE HOLY SEPULCHRE' ran through the lines; last, but not least, Eddred was present, as was Herluin, at that deadly encounter near Jaffa, when Saladin put forth all his might, and was vanquished. Throughout that mortal fight two warriors were ever close by Richard's side; and, although all his knights fought bravely, yet were there two whose feats surpassed all others, and who fell in the moment of victory: and when the cry of 'MELECH RIE' was raised, they still had strength to shout, 'THE PLANTAGENET! THE PLANTAGENET! THE LION OF ENGLAND TO THE RESCUE!'

'"Herluin died on the field—but Eddred saw him carried off in safety—whispering, '*Christ be thy guerdon; Scira is safe!*' At this very time, however, and whilst succouring his friend, Eddred's life-blood was welling out. Pierced with many a wound, he only survived till the next morning, but not without friends to close his eyes, and to receive, as friends will, the parting breath.

'"Richard the Lion-hearted, as Berengaria hinted, was as the lamb, and never left his side; and his last words were about the delight of his eyes—his beloved foster-child Scira, the Greek maiden—and on his lips there kept hovering, if not a sound, yet a whisper, which neither the mourning monarch nor yet his courtiers could make out; but they said: 'The word's a strange word, like to Penden or to Panson;' and as the king and his companions by the death-bed consulted together, they connected it with his coracle on the Rea and on the Severn—names they had long been familiar with—and they said, as they peered mournfully on his dying pallet, 'No doubt it is the place of his birth, and

the home or the burial-place of his father and of his mother.'"

'Meanwhile, as my venerable father told the tale,' continued my Talking Friend, 'the abbot of Shrewsbury, who had wrapped his face in his mantle, lifted up his hoary head, and, with eyes brimful of tears, exclaimed: "Peace be with their souls! Those rough warriors on Palestine's sandy plains had the natural touch in their breasts. Panson, sure enough, was the place of his nativity, and the priest that was at Hanwood in those days had told him of the Crusades. No one knows how far a word once uttered may reach, whether for good or for ill. Surely the words of the holy evangile are words of truth: '*Dico autem vobis, de quocunque verbo otioso quod loquuti fuerint homines, reddituri sunt rationem in die judicii. Nam ex dictis tuis justificaberis, et ex dictis tuis condemnaberis.*' But observe, good palmer, I speak not these words in disparagement of the priest of Hanwood—a better man in his place does not live—but they are words of truth and soberness—Christ's own words—to last as long as this world lasts."'

And so they parted; the abbot to his duties, which were many, and the palmer, with the '*Benedicite!*' on his way to Wenlock.

It does not fall within the scope of this story to tell of the disastrous return of Richard to his own country, of his melancholy and degrading captivity, and of the shipwreck of the fleet. Berengaria, separated from her husband, with other vessels, reached England; and amongst her followers was one who was never separated from her side—the faithful and the trusty Scira. I wish, as the palmer wished, I knew more about her, but no information is within my reach. All that is known historically is, that Berengaria survived Richard some years, and that she received from John, in 1201, a grant of dower of a thousand marks of silver annually, at 13*s.* 4*d.* a mark—a very considerable sum in those days. It is from tradition only that we pick up that the Greek maiden never left her, but was unto her as a daughter.

Having mentioned the coracles of the Severn and its tributaries, it may be interesting to the general reader,

specially the Salopian, to hear something of its early use, not only in Britain, but, in one shape or another, almost in all lands—east and west, north and south.

Perhaps one of the passages most interesting to a Briton is that in Lucan's 'Pharsalia,' or that relating to the same matter in Cæsar's *De Bello Civili*, on the crossing of the Sicoris. The former I give, appending Rowe's translation, for the benefit of the English reader, for which, if necessary, I beg to be pardoned; for I call well to mind how those grand scholars Bentley and Porson always wished to help their readers; and, in truth, a translation, even if like Rowe's of this passage, is very often as acceptable as the lump of sugar left at the bottom of a cup of fine Hyson:

Utque habuit ripas Sicoris, camposque reliquit,
Primum cana salix madefacto vimine parvam
Texitur in puppim, cæsoque inducta juvenco
Vectoris patiens tumidum superenatat amnem.
Sic Venetus stagnante Pado, fusoque Britannus
Navigat Oceano: sic cum tenet omnia Nilus,
Conseritur bibula Memphitis cymba papyro.

Soon as the falling Sicoris begun
A peaceful stream within his banks to run,
The bending willow into barks they twine,
Then line the work with spoils of slaughter'd kine.
Such are the floats Venetian fishers know
When in dull marshes stands the settling Po;
On such to neighb'ring Gaul, allured by gain,
The bolder Britons cross the swelling main;
Like those, when fruitful Egypt lies afloat,
The Memphian artist builds his reedy boat.

Rowe evidently uses the word *floats* from local information. Camden, speaking of the windings of the Severn at Rossal (granted by Elizabeth to the ancestors of Humphrey Sandford on the forfeiture of Sir Francis Englefield), tells his readers that 'hereabouts they use that most ancient kind of vessel called *floats*, made of rough boards and beams fastened together, which carry their goods down the river;' adding that 'their use and name come to us from Germany and the Rhine.'

But if the *floats* are gone out of use here and on the Wye, the use of Eddred's coracle still remains, as it does also on the Rea, and which I used dexterously enough in the fishing days of my boyhood. It is of this that Gough says, in his additions to Camden: 'The Shrewsbury fishermen use a vessel called a *coracle*, which they row with one hand while they fish with the other. It is about five feet long and three broad, almost oval, with a round bottom, made of sallow twigs or osiers, covered with horses' hides, and so light as to be carried on a man's back. These vessels seem to be the remains of the curraghs used anciently between Ireland and Scotland, and similar to the canoes of the Americans;' where the mention of the *curragh* reminds me how Colum, or Columba, passed over from Ireland to Kilcolumkill, on the Mull of Cantire, 'in a currah, or boat, made of wicks or woven osiers, and covered on the outside with hides;' and the lightness of the coracle will remind the African traveller how the Shillocks of the White Nile have their small rafts, or *floats*, 'constructed of a very buoyant wood called *ambadj*, sufficiently light for a man to carry on his back.'

What is the derivation of the word coracle is not so easy to decide. A Latiner—still used by the old people of Sussex generally for a *scholar*—would, no doubt, derive it from *corium*, a hide; but the Cymry would put in a demurrer, and refer us to the Welsh words, '*corwgl*, and *corwg*, and *cwragl*, and *cwrwgl*, a sort of small boat called a coracle used by fishermen on many rivers in Wales, as also in Ireland and Scotland. It is,' continues Richards, in his 'British Dictionary,' 'of an oval form, made of split roots or twigs interwoven and, on that part next the water, covered with pitched flannel, canvas, or horseskin, in which one man, being seated in the middle, will row himself with one hand, while with the other hand he manages his net or fishing-tackle; and, coming off the water, he will take the light vessel on his back and carry it home.' It may be added that the Welsh have another name for this *cock*, or boat, viz. *ysgoren*. The reader may see two fishermen carrying their coracles as a tail-piece to Yarrell's 'History of the Salmon,' but it is not very well executed. It is the same sort of boat which is referred to by

Sidonius Apollinaris in his 'Panegyricus Avito Augusto Socero dictus,' in the words which follow:

> Quin et Aremoricus piratam Saxona tractus
> Sperabat, cui pelle salum sulcare Britannum
> Ludus, et assuto glaucum mare findere lembo.

Look where we will throughout all the nations of the world, and some boat of this sort is sure to meet our eyes; and what was applied by Virgil to Charon's leaky craft may be applied very generally to all boats manned by the *Utricularii*:

> Gemuit sub pondere cymba
> Sutilis, et multam accepit rimosa paludem.

Unless we look to the ark in which Moses was exposed in the flags—for when his mother '*could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink*'—the next earliest record we have of a coracle is in the father of history, Herodotus. So curious and so valuable is his record that the chapter must be given at full length. The translation is from Rawlinson, and there is a wood engraving of a modern *kufa* in the notes, such as is still used on the Tigris and the Euphrates.

Τὰ πλοῖας αὐτοῖσι, κ.τ.λ. 'The boats which come down the river to Babylon are circular and made of skins. The frames, which are of willow, are cut in the country of the Armenians, above Assyria, and on these, which serve for hulls, a covering of skins is stretched outside: and thus the boats are made, without either stem or stern, quite round like a shield. They are then entirely filled with straw, and their cargo is put on board, after which they are suffered to float down the stream. Their chief freight is wine stored in casks made of the wood of the palm tree. They are managed by two men, who stand upright in them, each plying an oar, one pulling and the other paddling. The boats are of various sizes, some larger, some smaller: the biggest reach as high as 5,000 talents burden. Each vessel has a live ass on board; those of larger size have more than one. When they reach Babylon the cargo is landed and offered for sale, after which the men break up their boats, sell the straw and the frames,

and, loading their asses with the skins, set off on their way back to Armenia. The current is too strong to allow a boat to return up stream, for which reason they make their boats of skins rather than wood. On their return to Armenia they build fresh boats for the next voyage.'

Such is the curious chapter in the father of history; and, although his description applies rather to *rafts* which descend the Tigris and the Euphrates than to the *kufas* of the lower portions of these rivers—such as they are described by Ker Porter, Layard, and Colonel Chesney, and are still to be seen on the sculptures of Nineveh—yet in them have we the primitive coracle, like to that which Eddred of Panson used on the Rea—

> Limber ribs
> And the light wicker, cased with sturdy hides,
> Their level bottoms smooth.

Very much in place, therefore, is the description given by Southey, in 'Madoc in Wales,' at the meeting of Madoc and Llewelyn:

> But then the porter called Prince Madoc out
> To speak with one, he said, who, from the herd,
> Had sought him and required his private ear.
> Madoc in the moonlight met him: in his hand
> The stripling held an oar, and on his back,
> Like a broad shield, the coracle was hung.

On turning to the 'Saxon Chronicle,' under the year A.D. 891, the reader may pick out how 'three Scots came to King Alfred in a boat, without any oars, from Ireland, whence they had stolen away because they desired, for the love of God, to be in a state of pilgrimage they knew not where. The boat in which they came was wrought of two hides and a half, and they took with them food sufficient for seven nights; and on the seventh night they came to land in Cornwall, and then went straightway to King Alfred.'

It is said in the 'Ynglinga Saga' that Odin had a ship, which was called Skidbladnir, in which he sailed over wide seas, and which he could roll up like a cloth; and this, no doubt, was something of the coracle sort. Looking to the various ways by which, as well in ancient as in modern times,

rivers and lakes were traversed, something of the coracle shape always comes uppermost. In old time, as seen from the father of history, we have the wicker boat of the Euphrates; in modern times, even to this day, we have the reed boat, or 'balsa,' which is the only way of navigating the Peruvian Lake Titicaca—that marvellous lake between the Cordillera and the Eastern Andes, some 160 miles in length, and from 50 to 60 in breadth, and 13,000 feet above the level of the sea. Markham, in his 'Travels in Peru,' tells us that these 'balsas' are but 'large bundles of reeds tied together with a reed sail,' in Shakespeare's line,

> Being a bark to brook no mighty seas.

But perhaps, after all, what comes nearest to the coracle of our western clime are the *deris*, or inflated buffalo hides, of the East, 'such quaint, odd, shapeless things' as the reader may see by turning to Lieut.-Colonel Torrens's 'Travels in Ladâk Tartary and Cashmir,' where he will find three etchings and a graphic description from Moorcroft: to which may be added the following from Markham's 'Travels in Peru and India': 'In leaving Trichinopoly,' says this interesting writer, 'on the road to the Nilgherries, it is necessary to cross a small affluent of the Cauvery in ferry-boats. Those for foot passengers are of wicker covered with hides, and perfectly round, like those which are described by Herodotus, and are still used on the Tigris and Euphrates, as seen above once and again.'

A passage in Horace Marryat's 'One Year in Sweden,' under 'Engelholm,' tells how 'an English naval officer dwells there for fishing sake, wandering along the Rönne's banks with coracle slung on back, like those used by the ancients, and still used in Wales.' Had the reader watched his movements—the classical reader, I should have said—he might have called to his recollection another passage from the author of the 'Pharsalia,' connected with the fortunes of Cæsar and the humble boatman Amyclas:

> Littora curva legit, primisque invenit in undis
> Rupibus exesis hærentem fune carinam.
> Rectorem, dominumque ratis secura tenebat

Haud procul inde domus, non ullo robore fulta,
Sed sterili junco, cannâque intexta palustri,
Et latus inversâ nudum munita phaselo.

Rowe's paraphrase, rather than translation, is very poor here, but I must give it :

Then through the gloom his searching eyes explored
Where to the mouldering rock a bark was moored.
The mighty master of this little boat
Securely slept within a neighbouring cot :
No massy beams support his humble hall,
But reeds and marshy rushes wove the wall ;
Old shattered planking for a roof was spread,
And covered in from rain the needy shed.

On his way to the dwellings of the Mormons and to the Salt Lake, Burton still finds what does the service of Eddred's coracle, from which he beheld, as he passed from shallow to shallow, the trouts, of the Rea,

Sporting with quick gleam,
Show to the sun their waved coats dropt with gold.

' Our next obstacle,' says he, ' was the Walnut Creek, which we found, however, provided with a corduroy bridge. Formerly it was a dangerous ford, rolling down heavy streams of melted snow, and then crossed by means of the " *bouco*," or coracle—two hides sewn together, distended like a leather tub with willow rods, and poled or paddled.'

It should have been added in its proper place that, according to the superstition of the day, there was always a strip or two of the wych-elm inserted among the withs of Eddred's coracle ; just as when he made any expedition by land he took care to gather the betony and the mugwort, some of which, culled before sunrise, he would put into his shoe. According to Saxon usage, betony was to be culled in the month of August, and no iron was to be employed in digging it up ; in which case it was a certain sure antidote against spectres, fearful sights, and evil dreams. An ancient priest of Hanwood, indeed, said that in his day it was the custom of the *wise man* (for there were *wise men* as well as wise women in those days). ' *Tollam te, Artemisia, ne lapsus sim in viâ.*'

In concluding what I had to say of the coracle it seemed

to me that, as not unconnected with the subject in hand, I might refer to the keels of the Tyne and the pattamars of Calicut. The account of the first is given from Smiles' 'Lives of the Engineers,' of the second from Markham's 'Travels in Peru and India.'

'These keels are of a very ancient model, perhaps the oldest extant in England; they are even said to be of the same build as those in which the Norsemen navigated the Tyne centuries ago. The keel is a tubby, grimy-looking craft, rounded fore and aft, with a single large square sail, which the keel-bullies, as the Tyne watermen are called, manage with great dexterity, the vessel being guided by the aid of the "swasse," or great oar, which is used as a kind of rudder at the stern of the vessel. These keelmen are an exceedingly hardy class of workmen, not by any means so quarrelsome as their designation of "bully" would imply, the word being merely derived from the obsolete term "boolie," or beloved; an appellative still in familiar use amongst brother workers in the coal districts. One of the most curious sights on the Tyne is the fleet of hundreds of these black-sailed, black-hulled keels, bringing down at each tide their black cargoes for the ships at anchor in the deep water at Shields and other parts of the river below Newcastle.' It may be added that in George Stephenson's day the coals were drawn out of the pit in corves, or large baskets made of hazel rods. The Indian boats are an equally curious craft. 'In shore,' says Dr. Markham, 'there were a few native craft, called *pattamars*, at anchor. Pattamars are the vessels which have carried on the coasting trade on the western side of India from time immemorial. As in the days of Sinbad the Sailor, their planks are not nailed, but sewn together with coir twine; and they have high sterns and bows sheering rapidly aft. The deepest part is at the stem, whence the bottom curves inwards to the stern. A *pattamar* has two masts raking forward, with long, picturesque lateen yards, slung with one-third part before the mast and two-thirds abaft. They never attempt to tack, but always ware; and, if taken aback, there is no alternative but either to wait until she comes round or to capsize.'

Before I quit the banks of the Severn there is another point not unworthy of the consideration of the reader, and that is the salmon of the Severn, formerly much more abundant than now, but probably never so abundant as stated to be by common report and traditional indentures. And the truth must be told that the coracle, like Eddred's, was the greatest enemy of their race; and so it continued to be in my boyhood, and so was it as late as October 11, 1861, when two persons were brought up by the Association for the Preservation of the Fisheries of the River Severn, and charged before the borough magistrates with fishing 'with illegal nets in coracles upon the Severn within the limits of the borough during the fence months.' It is satisfactory to know that the care now taken is likely to be efficient, and Severn salmon, though never likely to be cheap, will not be the costly article it has been.

There can be no doubt whatever that salmon were very numerous in our rivers in earlier days—whenever the words '*lax*,' or '*lax bjord*,' occur, whether in the Norse or amongst the Orkneys and the Shetland Islands, they tell of their habitation, '*lax*' meaning salmon—but that they were so thickly shoaled in the Severn as to be an offence to the good apprentices there is, I think, but a tradition. The same has been said of Worcester and Gloucester. At the same time, as I may be mistaken in my view—which is in accordance with our able historians of Shrewsbury—I think it right to give the underwritten passage from the memoir of that very remarkable wood-engraver of his day, Thomas Bewick.

'From about the year 1760 to '67, when a boy, I was frequently sent by my parents to purchase a salmon from the fishers of the "strike" at Eltringhamford. At that time I never paid more, and often less, than three-halfpence per pound—mostly a heavy, guessed weight, about which they were not exact. Before, or, perhaps, about, this time there had always been an article, inserted in every indenture in Newcastle, that the apprentice was not to be obliged to eat salmon above twice a week; and the like bargain was made upon hiring ordinary servants. It need not be added that the *salmo* tribe then teemed in abundance in the Tyne, and

there can be little doubt that the same immense numbers would return to it again were proper measures pursued to facilitate their passage from the sea to breed. All animals, excepting fish, increase only; but they multiply, and that in so extraordinary a degree as to set all calculation at defiance. It is well known that they ascend every river, rivulet, and brook in search of proper places to deposit their spawn; and this is the case both with those kinds that quit the sea and those which never leave the fresh water. In their thus instinctively searching for proper spawning places, they make their way up to such shallows as one would think it impossible for any animal wanting legs and feet ever to crawl up to; therefore every improper weir or dam that obstructs their free passage ought to be thrown down,' &c.; to which he presently adds: 'Pought nets ought to be prohibited, as well as all catching of the salmon in mill-races by putting thorn bushes into them, to stop their passing through, and then letting off the water. In this way a cart-load of them has often been known to be taken at once.'

One more passage from this curious memoir—only spoilt by its politics—I shall venture to give here; for, although most of my readers may be very well acquainted with hare or fox, or otter hunting, they may not know what a sea Nimrod, in his way, the sea-pig, or the porpoise, is.

'I have seen,' says Bewick, 'a shoal of porpoises, off Tynemouth, swimming abreast of each other, and thus occupying a space of apparently more than a hundred yards from the shore seawards, and crossing the mouth of the river, so that no salmon could enter it. They went backward and forward for more than a mile along shore, and with such surprising rapidity that, in their course, they caused a foam to rise, like the breakers of the sea in a storm.'

But it is time to close this account; and if, perchance, one may fancy Queen Sabrina, in her pride of stream, saying to the Meole Brook, as it joins her waters beneath the bridge of Coleham—

> Our ocean shall those petty brooks devour,

one may call to mind the words of no mean writer in his

time, old Lambarde, in his 'Perambulation of Kent': 'Even as the body or the bulk of a tree is compact of many rootes, the which at first (and where they draine from every side the juice of the earth) be very small, and then do waxe bigger by little and little, until at the last they be united into one trunk or body, able to receive all their sap and moisture; so also the greater rivers (which fall not out of standing lakes) have their increase from many small wells or springs, the which crepe at the first out of the earth, and be conveyed in slender quilles, then afterwarde (meeting together in course) do grow by little and little into bigger pipes, and at the last do empty themselves into some one bottome, and so make up a great stream or channel.' So is it with the Severn or ever, having left its bubbling fontinels on Plinlimmon's heights, it reaches the sea, ruffling the estuary with its *Higre.*

But what delight, what thorough joy, doth such a stream as this afford to all animal life in its course! Think of the dragon-flies, burnished with blue and gold, as they flit about the willow beds. Think of the kingfishers, in all their beauty, as they dart like light from shallow to pool. Think of the cows, rivalling Cuyps, as they chew the cud in the shallow water by Cadwallader's gravel-bed, overshadowed by those grand old trees which used to stand above Gough's farm, swishing off the flies with their tails—not ruffled, but quite composed. Think of the sand-martins that riddled the red sandbanks into a thousand thousand holes, so cleverly mining in their nests that the most mischievously adroit of all the Shrewsbury schoolboys could never worm them out. Think of the countless swallows that revelled on a summer's day on the brightest of all bright streams, winging their marvellous flights from Shelton to Berwick, or from Leaton Shelf to Haughmond Park, and then back again to the old gravel ford of Cadwallader. Methinks, even now, I can hear that good man departed—the friend of all boys, and the special friend of the old town of Shrewsbury—the late Bishop Butler, quoting the 'Fragment' of Simonides, with his pleasant, kindly intonation of voice:

Ἄγγελε κλυτὰ ἔαρος κυανέα χελιδοῖ.

The very swallows might have stopped to listen to him. Think, again, of the swifts, or squealers, that used to circle round and round the old town spires from the earliest dawn till night closed in, as though, like those fabled birds of Paradise, they never needed rest, but drew up nourishment enough from the dew of heaven and the exhalations of the river. For one who has lived long away from it, there never was so time-honoured an old town as Shrewsbury; and wherever old Salopians are found, the Wrekin and the Severn are sure to be in their mouths.

And then I thought of the many histories, and traditions, and wild stories I had heard on Severn's banks in my boy hood, when every ford had its tale as well as its protecting spirits, that sang in the moonshine and warned the comers and goers. Then, again, my Talking Friend had entrusted to me all sorts of legends, some of which he had heard himself, more of which he had gathered from his venerable father—

Much who could tell, as one that much did know—

but they must be omitted for the present. One, however, was so like to the legend of Lund, given by Horace Marryat in his 'One Year in Sweden,' that I venture to quote it in that amusing traveller's own words; and if the reader, with his rod and with his line, should ever visit the ford of Emstrey, not far off from the old town, he may know to what ford to apply it. The Venerable Oak said it was a Saxon legend, and he added that old Tredithic was very fond of it. Indeed, he was much given this way, and had (according to his own account) frequently heard the water-spirits conversing on the little stream that flowed between the Pontes Woods and the crags of Ponsert Hill, where was his usual dwelling.

But let the reader judge for himself, though, perhaps, the laughing music of the waters, as they babbled and rippled over the shallows, were those very voices which superstitious Eld was used to attribute to the Neithe and the water-kelpy —to the soft voice of the one, or to the angry clamour of the other, as it tolled over the waves in a storm, and scared the very waters as they flowed.

The Legend of Lund.

'In the early days of the Christian faith a prelate of Lund, crossing a bridge on horseback, heard a sound of most exquisite harping, and stayed his course with his train of attendant monks; and, turning round, they beheld a young man of angelic beauty, with golden hair and heaven-blue eyes, naked to the waist, floating on the surface of the water. Gaily he passed his fingers over the seven-stringed lyre. The bishop, perceiving that it was the river-sprite (Neckan), cried to him in his zeal, "Why strike you your harp so joyfully? As soon may this dried staff which I hold in my hand become green and blossom as your soul be saved." Then the unhappy harper cast away his lyre, and sat upon the wavelets weeping bitterly. The proud churchman turned aside, and went again on his journey. When, lo! before he had proceeded far, his old walking-staff put forth green sprouts and leaves from the bark, and burst forth into flower, fresh and roseate as the apple blossom. Then the prelate knew how this was a sign from heaven to preach the blessed doctrine of salvation in a more kindly spirit. Hastening back to the wailing river-sprite, he showed him the blossoming staff, and said: "Look now, my staff *has become* green, and blossoming as a sprig in a flower garden; thus shall hope blossom in the heart of all creatures, for the Redeemer liveth!" Then the spirit took up his golden lyre again, and during the long, cold night joyous tones resounded along the shores of the river.'

The water-sprite of Emstrey Ford is as much a fable as the legend of Lund in Sweden; but this great truth is contained under it, that he who loves mercy, and preaches it, is the most likely to obtain it when he shall need it the most. I thank one most dear to me—dear as my own soul—who has, in love to me, tempered many a hard speech—hard as the lordly prelate of Lund.

CHAPTER XV.

URICONIUM.

He seemed as he wi' Time had warstled long.
BURNS, *The Auld Brig of Ayr.*

I love these ancient ruins ;
We never tread upon them, but we set
Our foot upon some reverend history.
WEBSTER, *Dutchess of Malfi*, i. 306, Ed. Dyce.

There is a fayre stone longe *bridge* on *Severne* to pass over toward *Roxcester* at *Acham* village. The destruction of *Roxcester* by all lykelyhood was the cause of the erection of *Shrewsbury*; for *Roxcester* was a goodly walled town untill it was destroyed by the *Danes* (?). The river of *Terne* cometh into *Severne*, almost in the middle way between *Acham* and *Roxcester*.—LELAND'S *Itinerary*, iv. 96, fol. 181, 6, Hearne.

What Baxter said in 1719 may be repeated in 1863 : 'Supervacuum foret hic monere plurima Romanorum numismata atque tessellata pavimenta ferè quotidiè hic effodi ab agricolis terram vertentibus. Nuperrimè etiam illic insignis reperta est Hypocausis, de quâ consulenda sunt Acta Philosophica.'—*Glossar. Ant. Brit.* p. 243.

Quippe dolentum
Maxima pars fueris, patriæ dum vulnera lugens
Sollicitudinibus vehementius exagitâris.
SIDON. APOLLIN. *Carm.* vii. 534, &c.

THERE had been a great fire not far off, and much damage was done. It so chanced that I was in the neighbourhood, and was on my return to Meole from the place of desolation. What so desolate as the remnants of a fire? As Dryden says, in the 'Annus Mirabilis,' in speaking of the great fire of London :

Those who have homes, when home they do repair,
To a last lodging call their wandering friends :
Their short, uneasy sleeps are broke with care,
To look how near their own destruction tends.

Those who have none sit round where once it was,
And with full eyes each wonted room require,
Haunting the yet warm ashes of the place
As murdered men walk where they did expire.

Just as I passed under the branches of the Old Oak there was the usual rustling of the leaves, which always implied speech, and my Talking Friend said:

'I never hear of a fire from the passers-by but I bethink me of what my venerable father used to say of the burning of Wroxeter. It was before his time a long while; I know not how long, but it had been told to him by those who heard it of their forefathers; and, as they reported the matter, they said: "Never was such desolation and destruction." I am not by any means sure by whom my father thought the city was destroyed, whether previously to the ravages of the Angles and the Saxons, or by the Northmen and the Danes. But he always spoke of it as a deed of dread and darkness, and his old leaves shuddered at the mention of it.'

And this mention of Wroxeter and its destruction set me a-thinking; for a year or two ago a beloved brother and myself—ancient Britons both—had visited the new diggings on a most tempestuous day—it was in October, 1859—and, without particular reference to 'Fasti,' or Calendar, after an hour's examination of the works, we had been literally driven off by foul weather.

Plura locuturi subito subducimur imbre:
Pendula cœlestes Libra movebat aquas.

On our return we dined in company with my old schoolfellow and friend, Dr. K——, one of the most learned men of his day, and he acquiesced in the remark I made, that there was 'more room for guesswork at Wroxeter than in any other place I had ever seen'; and, true enough, I had seen it from boyhood upwards. What Shrewsbury boy did not know of 'THE OLD WALL,' and of the '*Wroxeter dinders*'? And who with his scholarship—or rather dear old Bishop Butler's—thick upon him did not declare oracularly that 'dynders' could be nothing else but '*denarii*,' or, if one must concede a point, the Anglo-Norman '*denier*'?

From early days *I*, individually, had taken great interest

in the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,' and I had been inclined to refer the destruction of Wroxeter, or Uriconium, to the date there under the year

'DLXXVII.—In this year Cuthwine and Ceawlin fought against the Britons, and they slew three kings—Commail, and Condidan, and Farinmail—at the place which is called Deorham (Derham), and took three cities from them—Gloucester, and Cirencester, and Bath.'

Opinions, however, on this head are very various, and I am forgetting that the general reader may not know as much of Uriconium, which is Wroxeter, as an old Shrewsbury boy. I will therefore speak of it more fully.

Wroxeter, now a city of the dead—potted down, Lord Dudley said of Pompeii, for posterity—is the Rochecestre of 'Domesday,' held at that time by Rainald, and in Saxon times by Toret, who once had six Shropshire manors, three of which he retained till the Conqueror's survey was made. Eyton, indeed, remarks: 'There is some appearance of his being alive long after "Domesday," and, what is more extraordinary, of his being called *Toret de Wroxeter*.' He was contemporary with Hunnit, or Uluiet; and, as he attested Robert Fitz-Turold's charter to Salop Abbey, he was living in 1108, if not in 1121.

But where is Wroxeter? asks the impatient reader.

He that would visit Wroxeter—so might Herodotus begin a chapter—setting out from Shrewsbury, must get to it over Atcham Bridge, three miles distant; and as he looks upon the church by the river's side, so picturesque—so antiquely quiet, so beautiful—he must be hard of heart not to admire it. And if, perchance, he knew the history of that old church (indebted, probably, like Haughmond Abbey and Wroxeter Church itself, for its stones), and of an ancient worthy connected with it, and to be mentioned hereafter, he would admire it the more.

After leaving Atcham, and proceeding a while along the London Road, and passing the town by the Tern Bridge, the traveller must take a turn to the right (a Shrewsbury boy was always in haste, and became very thirsty about this point), and, by-and-by, crossing Bell Brook, he will arrive—if it be

the time of earing and sowing—at a soil much darker in hue than any he has seen before; and this will tell him at once, coupled with what he has heard before, that he is close to the precincts of the ancient URICONIUM, mentioned by the geographer Ptolemy in the second century under the name of VIROCONIUM, and about five miles distant from Shrewsbury. About half a mile further on is the modern village of Wroxeter, situated on the Watling Street, which, just below the village, crossed the Severn—in Roman days, no doubt, by a bridge.

Such would be my schoolboy's recollection of the spot, for one always went on to Wroxeter to refresh the inner man, and then returned to THE OLD WALL, with its long string courses of Roman bricks, three feet thick, twenty feet high, and seventy-two feet long. Wild as schoolboys are, they are odd creatures, easily impressed. There are plenty of Shrewsbury boys who will even yet recollect the sense of awe that came over them as they stood by this 'City of the Dead.' I have since applied to it the curious lines—

> It was a sad and stricken place. Though day
> Was in the heaven, and the fresh grass looked green,
> The light was withered, nor was silence there
> A soothing quiet; busy 't was and chill,
> And piercing, rather absence of strong sound
> Than stillness, like the shivering interval
> Between the pauses of a passing bell.

But the reader may like to see the early account of Camden, the antiquary, and to compare it with one or two more recent sketches.

'Let us now cross the river,' says this very valuable writer, 'to that part of the county which is on this side of the Severn, which I before observed properly belonged to the Cornavii. This is again in some sort divided into two parts by the river *Tern*, running north and south, and so called from its rising in Staffordshire out of a spacious lake, such as we call *tearnes*. In the hithermost, or eastern, of these parts, where the Tern joins the Severn, stood URICONIUM, as Antoninus calls it, but Ptolemy Viroconium, Nennius *Caer Vruach*, the Saxons Wrekenceaster, we Wrecketer and

Wroxeter." This chief city of the Cornavii seems to have been formed by the Romans when they fortified this bank of the Severn where the river is fordable, which it is not lower down towards its mouth. But after suffering greatly in the Saxon wars, it was totally ruined in the Danish, and is now a very small country village, where the plough frequently turns up Roman coins—evidences of its antiquity. I saw nothing here besides a few pieces of walls (commonly called the *Old Wall of Wroxeter*), built of hewn stone, divided by seven rows of British brick, and arched on the inside. Where these stand I suspect has been a castle, from the inequality of the ground, the banks, and the ruins of walls scattered up and down. Where the city stood, occupying no small extent, the soil is blacker than elsewhere, and yields plenty of excellent barley. Below this place, I am told, ran the Roman military road called *Watling Street*, either through a ford or over a bridge, whose foundations were lately uncovered a little higher up on making a fishing dam, which we call a *weare* in the river, straight to the forementioned *Strattons*, q. d. *Street-towns*, though its ridge is not now conspicuous. The ancient name of this *Uriconium* appears more strongly in the neighbouring hill, called *Wrekin Hill*, by others *Gilbert's Hill*, from whose top a most delightful plain is a most agreeable prospect all round over the country below, or, as Mr. Wright puts it in his "Popular Guide Book," the Old Wall "stands nearly in the centre of the ancient city, which occupied the highest ground within the walls—a commanding position, with the bold, isolated form of the Wrekin in the rear, and in front a panorama of mountains formed by the Wenlock and Stretton Hills, Caer Caradoc, the Longmynd, the Breiddon, and the still more distant mountains of Wales.

A hint has been thrown out before, and the 'Saxon Chronicle' quote, with reference to the destruction of Wroxeter, and I think, notwithstanding all fresh data, it is likely to remain a mooted question. At the same time some views of my own are very much strengthened by the words of the able historian of Shrewsbury. 'When Llywarc came into Powis, Uriconium was still standing, and in possession of the Britons; for he speaks of it by the name of Ddille Vrecon

(i.e. the city of Vrecon), the very name which the Saxons translated into Wrekenceastre, by contraction Wroxeter, the city of the Wrekin. But Pengwerne, as we have observed, was also in existence. Llywarc calls it Llys Pengwern, or *the palace of Pengwern*; for it was the residence of his friend and protector, Cynddylan; and hence the conclusion follows that it was just in the poet's time, and when he was already an aged man, perhaps about the year 570 (for he was born in 502), that the Britons of Wroxeter, finding their station there no longer tenable, retired before the flames of the Saxon army (for it has manifestly been destroyed by fire), and sought a place of refuge higher up on the Severn, where, protected by its deep bed, its sinuous windings, and the morasses of its banks, they might shroud themselves among the alders and willows which hid the foot, and the thickets which crowned the summit, of the lofty and peninsular knoll now covered by the capital of Shropshire.'

Telford, in his 'Descriptive Narrative,' falls in with this opinion, and says that the Britons retired from the city before the flames of the Saxon army, who called the place Wreconceaster, since by contraction Wroxeter. But I shall have to refer to this celebrated engineer's opinion again by and by.

Baxter's opinion, given in his 'Glossarium Antiquitatum Britannicarum'—a valuable book still—is, that, according to the report existing in his day, it was burnt by the Danes; and he adds—but I may give the pith of what he says from Mr. Hartshorne's 'Salopia Antiqua'—

'From the fact of an iron seal having been dug up at Wroxeter, upon which was engraved the head of a prince circled with a Roman diadem, and having long hair, with the inscription CAΠVT SERVI DEI, Baxter concludes the city had not been overthrown by the Saxons. He conjectures this head to have represented *Offa*, King of Mercia, on account of the intermixture of Greek and Latin characters. From the place being mentioned at the close of the seventh century, in the "Chorography of Ravenna," as the chief city of the Cornavii, he supposes that it flourished till the time of the Danes, and that perhaps even here at one period the Mercians fixed their capital; and if DDINLLE VRECON means

Wroxeter, and not the hill of the fortress of the WREKIN, *Uriconium* was standing when *Llywarc Hên* wrote his elegy on the death of Cynddylan.'

And thus the reader has before him the conflicting opinions relative to the Οὐιροκόνιον of Ptolemy, that very ancient city of the Cornavii, whether it be written, as in the Iter of Antoninus, *Urioconium*, or *Uriconium*, or *Virioconium*—in which words, or in part of them, Baxter implies that we have the root of other Shropshire words; as, for instance, Cound and Cundover. But etymology of this sort is almost a Slough of Despond, and, after all, we are brought to the conclusion that

Hominum sententia fallax.

A point to be spoken to with more certainty is that of the frequent excavations which have been made at Wroxeter, illustrative of the '*Auri sacra fames*' of Virgil, as well as of the old Ovidian line so familiar to schoolboys—

Effodiuntur opes, irritamenta malorum.

Certainly the children of the East have it not all their own way, but our forefathers were great treasure-seekers also.

The first instance I am aware of is recorded in the 'Annals of Worcester, or Chronicle of the Monks of Worcester,' printed in H. Wharton's 'Anglia Sacra,' which relate that in the year 1287 the devil, by the force of magic, was compelled to appear to a lad at Bilbury, near Wroxeter, and showed him urns and a ship, and a house full of gold and silver—'*Illis diebus juxta Wrocestre in loco quodam Bielbury per quendam incantatorem diabolus coactus cuidam puero apparuit, et urnas et navem et domum cum immenso auro ostendit.*'

These words show clearly enough that if the mines had their spirits, so, too, had the ancient ruins of the land like Verulamium or Uriconium; and, as regards the latter, we may detect in the above extract the old story of Geomagog and William the Conqueror, and the history of the Fitz-Warins above referred to, which the reader may see epitomised in Mr. Wright's 'Guide.'

The next instance is from Mr. Eyton's valuable 'An-

tiquities of Shropshire,' *Placita Coronæ*, 20 *Edw. I.*, *m.* 5. Among these *Pleas of the Crown*, heard at the same assizes (*i.e.* in 1292), there is a very curious entry. Certain persons, whether prompted by antiquarian zeal, and having knowledge of the antecedents of Uriconium, or actuated by less laudable motives, had been pursuing their researches at Wroxeter in an illegal way. Such *excavators*, as they would be called in the scientific language of the nineteenth century, were deemed to be criminals in the thirteenth. The record solemnly tells us how 'William, son of William de Hodency, Walter de Drayton, William Parson of Ledewych, and Richard Tyffe had dug by night at Wrocestre in search of treasure;' how the first-named digger was in prison and how the second had died. The justiciary had ordered the arrest of the two others, when they appeared in court and took their trial. They got their dismissal under the following verdict, viz. 'That, though they had dug as aforesaid, they had found nothing.' So, then, antiquarian searches, which we laugh at now if abortive, were once dangerous if successful.

More recent discoveries may be seen mentioned in Mr. Hartshorne's 'Salopia Antiqua,' beginning with the *Sudatory* or Hypocaust of 1701. Then in 1747 was found the clay mould which, like others of the same description, has given rise to so much discussion, and for which the reader is referred to the 'Additions' to Camden. It had on it the head of Julia, the wife of Severus, and the inscription is JULIA AUGUSTA. Later still, in 1752, were dug up, say the 'Additions,' 'in a field about 200 yards north-east from the old oak, the three sepulchral inscriptions now in the library of Shrewsbury School,' the puzzle of all old Shrewsbury boys, who now for two centuries have gazed upon them as a Romanist would upon sacred relics. Plates are given of them in Camden, and by Mr. Hartshorne, my old schoolfellow, who here, as elsewhere, is a very trustworthy authority.

Passing by, however, any other diggings, I will now give, in Mr. Smith's words, what some have called the *discovery* of Uriconium in the year 1788, in his 'Life of Mr. Telford,' who, in his early years, was much connected with Shrewsbury. There, indeed, it was that he kept his leather jerkin, and

his maul, and his tools always locked up; for, as he told a friend, 'there was no knowing when he might want them again.' In his latter days, when I visited him at his London home with the late Mr. Rickman, for the life of me I could not help thinking he somehow or another belonged to our old town, and he always wished to have his name coupled with Salopians.

'The situation of the place,' says Mr. Smith, 'is extremely beautiful, the river Severn flowing along its western margin, and forming a barrier against what was once the hostile districts of West Britain. For many centuries the dead city had slept under the irregular mounds of earth which covered it, like those of Mosul and Nineveh. Farmers raised heavy crops of turnips and grain from the surface, and they scarcely ever ploughed or harrowed the ground without turning up Roman coins or pieces of pottery. They also observed that in certain places the corn was more apt to be scorched in dry weather than in others—a sure sign to them that there were ruins underneath—and their practice, when they wished to find stones for building, was to set a mark upon the scorched places when the corn was on the ground, and after harvest to dig down, sure of finding the store of stones which they wanted for walls, cottages, or farmhouses. In fact, the place came to be regarded in the light of a quarry, rich in ready-worked materials for building purposes. About this time a quantity of stone was wanted for the purpose of building a blacksmith's shop, and on digging down on one of the marked places the labourers came upon some ancient works of a more perfect appearance than usual. Curiosity was excited; antiquarians made their way to the spot; but, lo! they pronounced the ruins to be neither more nor less than a Roman bath in a remarkably perfect state of preservation. Mr. Telford was requested to apply to Mr. Pulteney, the lord of the manor, to prevent the destruction of these interesting remains, and also to permit the excavations to proceed, with a view to the buildings being completely explored. This was readily granted, and Mr. Pulteney authorised Telford himself to conduct the necessary excavations at his expense. This he promptly proceeded to

do, and the result was, that an extensive hypocaust apartment was brought to light, with baths, sanatorium, dressing-room, and a number of tile pillars, all forming part of a Roman floor, sufficiently perfect to show the manner in which they had been constructed and made.'

Telford's own words, in his descriptive narrative of his professional labours, are as follow: 'I caused the place to be carefully cleared to a considerable extent, and thus brought to light a set of Roman baths, of rude construction, but sufficiently perfect in regard to the several necessary apartments. Of these I made a correct plan and sundry sections, and the Rev. Francis Leighton, of Shrewsbury—a person of antiquarian knowledge—having written a description of them, it was read before the "Society of Antiquaries" in London on May 7, 1789, and published in the ninth volume of the "Archæologia."'

Mr. Rickman, in a very valuable note which I shall presently transcribe, mentions the term 'Roman baths,' referring to those of Bignor, in the county of Sussex, and the *Aquæ Solis*, or Bath, in Somersetshire. Recent excavations have rather tended to corroborate the words of Telford, but, as I hinted before, of all ancient places perhaps Wroxeter gives fuller scope for guesswork than any other. One thing, however, is quite clear—as well from Wroxeter as from all other Roman discoveries in Britain, to say nothing of those at Pompeii—that Roman, compared with modern, houses were but very sorry and contracted affairs. At the same time we must always bear in mind the passion which Greeks and Romans had for the gymnasium and the xystus, the stoa and the portico. It is not questioned that a Crassus, a Scaurus, or a Claudius, and others many had their costly mansions, and that the cutting censure of Sallust may be true; but neither Greek nor Roman could boast of the houses of the great cities of Europe in the nineteenth century. We have all, probably, at one time or another, been carried away by the gorgeous description of Rome and Athens in the fourth book of the 'Paradise Regained.'

But to return to Mr. Rickman's note.

'These documents' (before referred to) 'afford little

reason for designating the Roman remains at Wroxeter as baths. They are, in reality, *hypocaust* apartments (warmed by fire under the floor) in a tolerably good dwelling-house. The Romans having no chimneys (an invention not earlier than the middle of the fourteenth century), they could not defend themselves against cold otherwise than by some contrivance which permitted smoke to escape without entering the inhabited apartment. Their floors, therefore, were somewhat complex. On a strongly paved foundation floor were placed many short pillars—round if of stone, square if of piled bricks. [Roman bricks (*lateres*) were in a flat form, like our paving tiles.] Upon these pillars large paving tiles, adapted to the spaces between them, were so laid as to form a complete floor ; upon which was next laid lime and mortar rubbish [*Rudus novum aut vetus*], about a foot deep ; and on the surface of that appears the visible floor of the room, adorned, in the best apartments, with patterns and figures of tesselated work [*tesseræ*, dimin. *tessellæ*, *tesserulæ*] of more delicacy in proportion as their component particles were of small dimensions. Such hypocaust apartments could only be made on a ground floor, so that there was no upper floor, except in crowded towns ; and a tolerable country residence [villa] occupied—often enclosed—a great spot of ground. As to baths, no family of rank, or even of competence, could fail to have one in a decent country residence, the use of woollen next the skin rendering frequent ablution necessary ; and the remains of public baths in the Roman capital prove that nothing was so sure a passport to popularity as the enormously extensive baths in ancient Rome built by the rivalry of successive emperors.'

It may be added here to what has been said of Roman houses that up to this time all discoveries and excavations have given us but a poor notion of Roman streets—South Saxons would call them little better than *twyttens*, or alleys. 'But this,' Mr. Wright informs us, 'was certainly not the case with' three of the streets of 'Roman Uriconium, which seem to have been fine, wide streets ; and in one to the north the pavement of small round stones appears to have occupied only the middle part of the street, designed, probably, for

carriages and horses. A tolerably wide space on each side seems, as far as can be traced, to have been unpaved.'

To anyone who shall carefully examine this most remarkable remnant of antiquity this must be quite clear—that it was plundered and burnt. The tradition which had reached the Venerable Oak is not one to be combated. The marks are as clear as the way to the parish church. In examining it, as I did, I could be more sure of nothing. The flight of a poor inmate or two, and their hidden treasure, only tells the same painful tale—they and their money perished together. As to the collection of skulls found there, and of which Dr. Henry Johnson has given a description, I am inclined to think that the peculiar distortion was produced by pressure after burial. I am aware, however, that in differing from him I differ from a very competent judge. The reader should turn to plate xii. of the 'Guide to the Ruins of Uriconium.'

To this same Guide the reader is also referred for a section of a hypocaust, where he will see the flue tiles running up the wall of the room. If I quote Mr. Knight's description, added to what has been said above, everything but ocular inspection will be before us. These hypocausts 'had an entrance from the outside, somewhat like the mouth of an oven; and fires being lighted here, the hot air was driven inward, and not only filled the space under the floor, but entered the flue tiles by the holes in the sides, was carried by them up the inside of the wall, and, no doubt, had some way of escape at the roof'—antecedent, of course, to the use of a chimney. 'The ashes and soot of the fires have been found in the hypocausts at Uriconium, just as they were left when the city was overthrown and ruined by the barbarians. The ashes are chiefly those of wood, but considerable remains of mineral coal have been discovered. These hypocausts must sometimes have become clogged and out of order, and it would be necessary to cleanse them, as people in after times cleansed chimneys. A sort of alley across the middle of the large hypocaust last mentioned was probably intended for this purpose. It communicated with another hypocaust, adjoining it to the north by a doorway, and this other hypocaust was entered by a

rather large archway at the foot of the steps already mentioned. People appear to have been sometimes satisfied with having the hot air merely under the floor, and the floor tiles were not always used. Comparatively few of them, indeed, have been yet found in the hypocausts of Uriconium.'

There are some remarkable lines on this subject in the 'Mosella' of Ausonius, which some old Shrewsbury boy may like to read, and think upon dear old Bishop Butler :—

> Quid quæ sulphurea substructa crepidine fumant
> Balnea, ferventi cum Mulciber haustus operto
> Volvit anhelatas tectoria per cava flammas,
> Inclusum glomerans æstu exspirante vaporem?
> Vidi ego defessos multo sudore lavacri
> Fastidisse lacus, et frigora piscinarum,
> Ut vivis fruerentur aquis ; mox amne refotos
> Plaudenti gelidum flumen pepulisse natatu.
> Quod si Cumanis huc afforet hospes ab oris,
> Crederet Euboicas simulacra exilia Baias
> His donasse locis : tantus cultusque nitorque
> Allicit, et nullum parit oblectatio luxum.

It is not an easy thing to convey to anyone who has not seen these excavations an idea of the mixed *débris* which have been thrown out. The quantities of animal bones I saw at the entrance to the river would have filled a waggon. They had been well culled, and appeared as if no further thought had been taken of them. The catalogue of the Wroxeter antiquities in the museum at Shrewsbury (well worth visiting) speaks of bones of a dog of the mastiff kind —an unknown species—of those of the horse, ox, roe, red deer, of the elk of Ireland, and of the wild boar ; but no bones of the wolf are recorded to have been disinterred.

Perhaps the most interesting question to the scholar is that of the 'coin moulds,' for which the reader is referred to the 'Additions' to Camden, and next to them the coins themselves. An earlier list of these is also given in the 'Additions.' The recent ones, discovered during the present excavations close to the old man who had fled for protection to the hypocaust above alluded to, one hundred and thirty-two in number, are given in the Guide so often referred to, and annexed to the list are the following very pertinent observa-

tions: 'This is, I believe, the first instance which has occurred in this country in which we have had the opportunity of ascertaining what particular coins, as being then in daily circulation, an inhabitant of a Roman town in Britain, at the moment when the Roman domination in this country was expiring, carried about with him.' Mr. Roach Smith, speaking of the great majority of these coins—those of the Constantine family—remarks to me: 'I suspect these coins were sent into Britain even after the time of Valens, because they are all comparatively sharp and fresh. It is not improbable that the procurators at Treves and at Lugdunum may have had large stores of these coins by them, which they sent out at intervals.' A consideration of these coins gives us an approximation, at least, towards the date at which Uriconium must have been destroyed. Mr. Roach Smith agrees in the opinion that a comparison of them points to the very latest period previous to the establishment of the Anglo-Saxons. At a later period the freshly-struck coins of the Constantine family could not have been brought over. They show us that at that time the great mass of the circulating medium consisted of the coins of the Constantine family, which again explains to us why the first coinage of the Anglo-Saxons was nearly all copied from the coins of the emperors of that family. Again, the care with which these small copper coins, for only one is of plated silver, seem to have been hoarded up, and the anxiety of their possessors to preserve them in the midst of a frightful calamity, may perhaps assist us in forming an estimate of the relative value of money at this period.

As far as I am aware, the Saxon coins have, up to this time, been found in the old mines; and thus far the remark of Bishop Gibson is confirmed, who said he had it from an eye-witness—referring to an earlier discovery—'that none of the coins were *Saxon*, whence the city is supposed to have been destroyed before the Saxon, and consequently not in the Danish, times.' The more general supposition is, as we have seen, that it was destroyed *by* the Saxons, and I certainly myself incline to that opinion.

The earliest coin found in the present excavations dates from Domitian's reign; the others, as we have seen, are of

the time of the Constantines. Only two silver coins have as yet been discovered; the rest are of bronze and brass, designated, as I have before mentioned, by the local name '*dinders*': the only name known when I was a boy, a very mischievous boy, at Shrewsbury School.

The quantities of broken pottery which have been turned up will likewise attract attention. Both what we call Samian ware—that beautiful antique lustrous red—and British pottery are found there in abundance. The former was evidently set store by, as *riveted* specimens are to be found in the Shrewsbury Museum. Our native pottery generally—such as was made at Castor, in Northamptonshire, and at Upchurch, on the banks of the Medway, in Kent—was of a blue or slate colour; but the native specimens from Wroxeter are the *white* Broseley clay and the *red* Salopian clay, differing from the Samian, of the Severn valley. This is to be noted by all who are curious in such matters, for it is evidently a fact that our early potters imitated the Samian, just as the Wedgewoods in our day have imitated the Tuscan, or, as it is more commonly called, the Etrurian ware. One is half inclined to arrive at the conclusion that there must have been a pottery in this neighbourhood, so taking precedence of the more modern ones of Coalbrookdale.

As not unconnected with the keramic art, it must not be passed by that quantities of thick window glass, some of which is before me, have been picked up upon the floors of the houses. How the houses of Wroxeter were lighted is still an unsolved problem, but it has been surmised that it was by roof windows. Certainly, as far as we know, 'the Roman houses in Britain had no upper stories, and all the rooms were on the ground floor. No traces of a staircase have ever been found, and all the fragments which are met with indicate that the rooms were open to the roof.' But, after having carefully examined, on the spot and in the Shrewsbury Museum, the fragments of roof tiles, &c., I do not think I can do better than transcribe what Mr. Wright says, who, I hope, will excuse the large use I have made of his unpretending but very serviceable little volume.

'The coverings of the Roman houses of this island con-

sisted of large square tiles with strongly flanged edges ; and these tiles being joined side to side, a carved tile, forming the half of a cylinder, was placed over the flanges of the two tiles which joined, thus holding them together, and at the same time protecting the juncture so that rain could not pass through it. The Roman houses were also very commonly roofed with slates, or rather flags, and this appears to have been the more usual description of roofing in Uriconium. These roof flags are found scattered about abundantly on the floors, sometimes unbroken. They are formed of a micaceous laminated sandstone, which is found on the edge of the North Staffordshire and Shropshire coalfield, at no great distance from Wroxeter, and must have produced a glittering appearance in the sunshine. Their form was that of an elongated hexagon, with a hole at one end, through which an iron nail was passed to fix it to the wooden framework. The nail is often found still remaining in the hole. These flags, which are very thick and heavy, were placed to lap over each other, and thus formed a roof in lozenges or diamonds. Slates, forming one half of the hexagon were placed at the top of the roof, so as to make a strictly horizontal line. It is a curious circumstance that in the illumination of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts we find roofs of houses which evidently represent both these methods, and which appear, therefore, to have been continued long after the Roman period. In fact, they are still used in Yorkshire, and perhaps in other counties, and have been used very recently on the Welsh border. In the towns which were the head-quarters of a legion, as at Caerleon, Chester, and York, or which had been occupied for some length of time by legionary detachments, we often find the name and number of the legion stamped on the roof tiles. These roof tiles were frequently used for other purposes ; they are sometimes employed in the strong courses in walls, when the builders appear to have run short of the ordinary square tiles or flat bricks ; and they are still more frequently used to form the beds of drains and aqueducts, when the flanged edges were turned up, and, set in the cement, formed the side of the watercourse. A very good example of this use of the roof tiles may be seen in a drain at Wroxeter.'

There is not space here to enter particularly into the mixed articles which have been found amid the ruins of old Uriconium—such as are a knife of stone, whetstones, and other knives; hair-pins of bone, of bronze, and, indeed, of wood, reminding us of the boxwood out of which Roman combs were manufactured. Juvenal, for instance, has the words—

Caput intactum buxo;

and Ovid, at greater length, and with a more close and particular application—

Non mihi detonsos crines depectere buxo
Non ungues ferro subsecuisse licet;

though, by the by, it should be remarked that the only *combs* found here, up to this time, are of bone. They seemed to have been wrought in the city, as a remnant of a sort of turning lathe has been found there. The lathe, in its simplest form, as well as the potter's wheel seem to have been the common property of all nations.

It is remarkable that a wooden hair-pin should have escaped the action of the fire when the city was destroyed but not more so than that some large plates of lead, and a bowl, or cup, made of lead, and a block-tin handle should have shared a like enduring fate. But in this way, as in numerous others, exceptions tend to prove a rule; and, as instances in point, I may refer to the beans which were dug out of Pompeii and vegetated—the sprout being hermetically sealed up, as it were—and wheat taken out of a mummy in Egypt, which, some years ago, I grew in my own garden.

For divers other articles the reader must be referred to the catalogue before indicated, where, besides the mention of bases, capitals, and shafts of columns, and stucco for covering the walls, iron hinge for a door, iron bolts, nails, and stancheons, he may find an account of artist's palettes, weights marked with Roman numerals, spear heads, the fragment of a butt *strigil* and of a horse shoe, of keys of different forms and of an iron padlock, of *stiles* of bronze and iron. 'The most curious, however,' says Mr. Wright, 'of these miscellaneous objects is a medicine stamp, intended to mark packets

or bottles of what in modern times would be called patent medicines. A certain number of these Roman medicine stamps have been found in Britain and on the Continent; and they are all, like the stamp found at Wroxeter, for salves or washes for the eyes, diseases of the eyes having been apparently very common among the inhabitants of the western provinces of the Roman empire. The Wroxeter stamp—intended for a collyrium, or salve for the eye, called *dialebanum* or *dialibanum*—gives us, in all probability, the name of a physician resident in Uriconium. The inscription may be read as follows, filling up the abbreviations: TIB*erii* CL*audii* M*edici* DIALIBA*num* AD OMNE VIT*ium* O*culorum* EX O*vo*, i.e. The dialibanum of Tiberius Claudius, the physician, for all complaints of the eyes, to be used with egg.'

Possibly some great discovery is yet to be made at Wroxeter, as, comparatively, a very small portion of it has been examined. I think myself that the most remarkable fact is the *few Roman skeletons* that have been disinterred—not more than twenty in all. More time for escape must be allowed than is generally supposed. But to say the truth, the whole history of this ancient city is, like itself, buried in thick darkness; and century after century passes, and we know no more—if we know that for certain—than that Pengwerne, or Shrewsbury, arose in its stead.

In carefully going over the collections in the Shrewsbury Museum anyone will be struck, I think, with the comparative inferiority of the arts of those days and of their manufacturing skill. Of course, one does not expect the excellence of Greece or Rome in Britain, but in the articles thus far discovered there is an unmistakable want in the execution scarcely to have been anticipated where the Romans had a footing. Perhaps they lived too much with their lives, as it were, in their hands to occupy themselves much in such matters, and savage life and the surrounding barbarism kept under and subdued the inventive faculty. Be this as it may, Sir Charles Lyell's remark is not to be lightly passed over: 'The slowness of the progress of the arts of savage life is manifested by the fact that the earlier instruments of

bronze were modelled on the exact plan of the stone tools of the preceding age, although such shapes would never have been chosen had metals been known from the first. The reluctance or incapacity of savage tribes to adopt new inventions has been shown in the East by their continuing to this day to use the same stone implements as their ancestors, after that mighty empire, where the use of metals in the arts was well known, had flourished for 3,000 years in their neighbourhood.'

A sense of melancholy must come over the mind as it contemplates ruins like these. If I have felt it in going over the nettles, when the old Pest Houses stood in Arundel Park, with my friend Mr. Constable, what an additional oppression must have weighed down the mind at Uriconium! As one says, 'The long rank grass or the nettles, waving amid man's habitations, look all the sadder as betokening that man was once there, and is gone.' But, as the workmen employed in the excavations of Carthage said to Mr. Davis, '*Eddunia fannia*'; this world is transitory, and our labour is not to be confined to it exclusively. But was there any old Roman when Wroxeter was sacked and burnt with fire who could have taken up the words of the popular poet of his nation, and have said—

> Sic erat in fatis: nec te tua culpa fugavit,
> Sed deus: offenso pulsus es urbe deo.
> Non meriti pœnam pateris, sed numinis iram.
> Est aliquid magnis crimen abesse malis.
> Conscia mens ut cuique sua est, ita concipit intra
> Pectora pro facto spemque metumque suo.

Probably there were none there to utter these or like words, or to have any thoughts of the sort, for they were the expiring remains of Roman power, pent up, as it were, in a fortress; and all they could think about was, how to save their lives when the *seaxe* glistened above their heads, and the crackling of the fire dismayed them. Nothing can be nearer the truth than the remark of Mr. Kemble in his 'Saxons in England.' 'The pride of the invaders might be soothed by the erection of a few *castra*, or *præsidia*, or *castella*, in the Welsh Marches; the itinerary of an emperor might finish in

a commercial city on the Atlantic; but in Wales the Romans had hardly a foot of ground which they did not overshadow with the lines of their fortresses: and to the least instructed eye the chain of fortified posts which guard every foot of ground to the east of the Severn tells of a contemplated retreat and defence upon the base of that strong line of entrenchments.'

On my return from a visit to the river of Wroxeter on one occasion my Talking Friend, having heard all I had to say about it, told me how his venerable father used to speak of a person whom he called *Weallende Wulf*—which I interpreted to mean, travelling or wandering wolf—who was supposed to have visited the ruins, and to have brought back with him what was in those days considered great treasure. He did not live in the Old Oak's neighbourhood, but he was well known to Tredithic, so often mentioned in these pages, as a remnant of old Druidical days. He believed he came from Wenlock, as he often used to talk of St. Milburga, and either had made or intended to make an offering at her shrine. 'My venerable father, as I very well recollect, stated that he had in his possession a great many curious coins, and, amongst other things, some beautifully-wrought vessels, chipped however and broken at the edges, on which were inscriptions. These, he added, it was necessary to notch or cut—for by this means the magic spell was broken—and after this they might be drunk out of and used with impunity. He was a very odd, capricious man, my father used to say, and never wished to enter into any house in which was a new-kindled fire; he said it made him faint—a very common superstition in those days after anyone had seen strange sights. No one ever knew what he had seen, but he used to speak ominously and mysteriously; as I lately heard you say, in

> A most fearful tone,
> Like one repenting on his latest moan;

and it was very generally believed that he had seen, and been scared by, a ghost. Old Cerdic, who had lived from time immemorial by the Rea side, had no doubt about it in his own mind, and he maintained, in no measured speech but very

plain Saxon, that he had come by his possessions unfairly. His talk, he would say, was not the talk of an honest Saxon, if Saxon he was, and there was in him a niggardly care for pelf, unbecoming a child of the north.

'Oddly enough,' continued my Talking Friend, 'as no one trusted him, so he was not able to trust himself with his riches. Under the impression that he was constantly watched he seized an opportunity and buried his treasure; but, falling sick, he lost his head, and was not able to communicate to those around him where he had bestowed it, though it was evident to all that there was something on his mind which he wished to disclose. More oddly still, on his recovery he had no recollection of the fact himself, but was constantly wandering about, as though in search of something. After a time he left the neighbourhood of the Rea unregretted, and possibly somewhat feared, for his ways were odd and his manner of speech unsatisfactory.

'The last that was heard of him was in the neighbourhood of Ketley, which our old native inhabitants—such as old Glover, and Farrington, and William Overington—call the "*Low Country*"; and it is said that his cunning in excavating was turned to some account there, and that he had a sort of knowledge of the coal and iron stone which lay buried, and as yet undiscovered, in that basin. Whether this is true or not I cannot say; I can only tell what my venerable father reported. From what I have heard myself from miners passing and repassing, I have no reason to think that the spirits of the mines are amiable ones; and Peggy Cartha, by the bridge side, always maintained that Weallende Wulf had had dealings with them—they had scratched their mark upon him, and he was no better than he ought to have been.'

From all that I could make out, though the man bore that wolfish kind of a name, he must have lived in early Norman days. Perhaps he had seen better times; and, as the old playwright said, this is

> The fashion of the world.
> From decayed fortunes every flatterer shrinks;
> Men cease to build when the foundation sinks.

Whether or not, and setting prejudices aside, he seems to have been a person of very considerable information—and this my Talking Friend told me his venerable father readily and at once admitted—still, he thoroughly disliked all he had ever heard of him; and Martial's epigram, since applied to Dr. Fell, would have had rhyme and reason enough in it under such circumstances; indeed, it is often applicable:—

> Non amo te, Sabidi, nec possum dicere quare;
> Hoc tantum possum dicere, non amo te.

It is more than probable that some of the coins discovered by the Old Oak's roots were of Weallende Wulf's burying, though others, and certainly all the Saxon ones, were of later date than the *burning* of Uriconium. But this is a question which needs no mooting, for the burying of money has been confined to no age; and as it is even yet practised one need not wonder at any *treasure-trove* of any sort. It is probably altogether inconceivable what sums were buried in the days of the great rebellion—only to be paralleled, perhaps, by the treasure buried in the Indian Mutiny.

It has been asked, Was it possible there were any Christians there at the time of its destruction? Christians there were in England, no doubt, long before this. But it is impossible to say that there were any at Wroxeter. We do not know, in fact, what Roman legion was stationed there; and if we did, the record on a tombstone, such as on those in the Shrewsbury Library, would be no proof; for soldiers then, as now, had their furloughs and passes, and where the tree fell there it would naturally lie. At all events if there were any Christians in that city '*their memorial has perished with them.*' If we do not know the people by whom the city was sacked and burnt—for, as we have seen, some say they were Saxons and some Danes—much less can we know anything of individuals. This, however, one may certainly affirm, if time and space were given, there must have been some who grieved when they saw the desolation before them; for the old father said true, '*Libido transacta semper sui relinquit pœnitudinem.*' Many and many a one, as he set up his new docking by the alder beds of Pengwerne, must have grieved

over the fallen fortunes of Wroxeter, so pleasantly situated on the banks of the Hafren.

Never seek sorrow, for it comes too fast!

Some there were, possibly, who lingered in the neighbourhood, like pilgrims by shrines they loved, but the smouldering remains were too much for the o'erfraught heart, and they departed at last, determined to look upon the city of the dead no more.

It does not fall within the compass of these pages to dwell upon the history of the present church of Wroxeter, or of the old collegiate church and its Domesday *league* of wood, whatever that may mean. Mr. Eyton states that it was 'richly endowed and greatly cherished by the Norman lords of the manor,' and that 'probably the fabric was of this construction. Moreover the Fitz-Alans, Rainald's successors,' *i.e.* the Rainald of Domesday, 'are known to have had a residence at Wroxeter. Perhaps,' he adds, 'Rainald was its builder.' All this, however, must be passed by here, as must the gift of the church of Wroxeter and the monastery of Haughmond, in the time of Henry II., by William Fitz-Alan; and how 'by six generations of the Fitz-Alans the claims of Haughmond Abbey to the church of Wroxeter were utterly ignored.' But, though none of these matters fall into the contents of these pages, let no stranger visit the old town of Shrewsbury without making his pilgrimage to that time-honoured abbey. If he do not survey the ruins with a melancholy regret that such buildings *should have been, and now are not*, I am very much mistaken. I have not been there now for forty years, but the ruins are as vividly impressed on my memory—specially the triple arches of the chapter house—as if I had been there yesterday. But how very true—how painfully true—are those two short lines of Keble?—

In this bad world below
Noblest things have vilest using.

The wise preacher said: '*I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth*;' and so have I seen—dreadful profanation!—old stone coffins, as well as

discarded fonts, used as horse-troughs. I would not be sure that I saw this at Haughmond Abbey—my memory may prove treacherous—but I have seen such things, and I am never likely to forget it.

It may be added here that the mistakes which have been made as to the too great antiquity of Haughmond Abbey are attempted to be reconciled by Mr. Eyton. They probably originated with Leland, who says in his 'Itinerary': '*William Fitz-Alane* founded *Haghemon anno Dom.* 1101, the i. of *W. Rufus.* Ther was an hermitage and a chapell before the erectynge of the Abbey. *W. Fitz-Allyn* and his wyffe, with *Richard Fitz-Allen* and othar, ar ther buried, and Richard Fitz-Alan, a childe, which childe fell, as is sayde, by the neclygence of his norice, out of her armes from the batelments of the Castle of *Shrawardig.*' Such is the passage in its original spelling and variations of the same name. Leland is mistaken as to the interment of the founder, who was buried at Shrewsbury Abbey; but the mention of the hermitage and the chapel paves the way for the earlier date. 'Summarily, then,' says Mr. Eyton, 'we conclude the Augustine House of Haughmond to have been founded as a priory between 1130 and 1138, to have grown into an abbey in or before 1155, and that its founder in all respects was the first William Fitz-Allan.' For more general information the reader is referred to Mr. Duke's 'Antiquities of Shropshire,' under the head of 'Haughmond Abbey and Demesnes, including Upton and other Estates in that Vicinity.'

CHAPTER XVI.

SAXON AND NORMAN.

Let others hail the rising sun,
I bow to that whose course is done ;
Which sets in endless night ;
Whose rays benignant blessed our isle,
Made peaceful nature round us smile
With calm but cheerful light.
GARRICK.

There 's no man ought for rule another rid,
Nor yet his hands with cruel blood distayne ;
For blood doth alwayes cry for blood agayne.
Mirror of Magistrates : King Mempricius, i. 99.

Our town did not, it appears, receive much improvement from the Britons, who had subjects of more immediate necessity to occupy their attention. If they found it a *Hill of Alders*, they left it in nearly the same condition ; for we may fairly infer the state in which the Saxons received it from them by the appellation which it obtained from its new masters, *Scrobbes-byrig* importing that it was a *bury*, or fenced eminence, but overrun with *scrubs* or *shrubs*.—*History of Shrewsbury*, i. 19.

I holde on way to auncient Shrewsebrie towne,
And so from horse, at lodging lighting downe,
I walkt the streetes, and markt what came to vewe,
Found old things dead as world was made a newe.
CHURCHYARD'S *Worthiness of Wales*, p. 88.

IT was mentioned in the preceding chapter that the Old Oak's father spoke of the desolation of Wroxeter, as delivered down by tradition, with horror and distress of mind amounting to amazement. My Talking Friend has often told me that whenever he referred to that ancient city his leaves would shiver and tremble, as though he had been a weak aspen poplar instead of what he was, HEART OF OAK. It was long, he used to say, before Pengwerne was looked upon as a rising sun. The neighbouring Britons would still turn

towards Uriconium, or, as some of the ancient worthies would still call it, *Caer Urnach*; and, although the Romans and their legionaries had been settled there, they still thought of it as a possession of their own; and it was a long while before this impression wore out. Some, perhaps, thought that blow would cry loud from the ground, and that the old waste place would arise from its ashes and become a flourishing place once more. And the sentiment is natural, for one neither likes to give up old familiar faces nor old familiar places.

> Turpe, referre pedem, nec passu stare tenaci:
> Turpe, laborantem deseruisse ratem:
> Turpe, sequi casum, et fortunæ cedere, amicum
> Et, nisi sit felix, esse negare suum.

There were times when this grand old oak might have been called, like the oak of Deborah, Allon-bachuth, or '*The Oak of Tears*.' Hard in grain, hard in wood, crippled and hard, too, in bark, he had the softness and kindness of woman. In heavy trouble commend me to the softness of a hard nature, which will go through fire and water to save a friend and to help him in extremities. Such have I known, and admired, and loved.

> I tell thee, Stremon, he has a stirring soul:
> Whatever it attempts or labours at
> Would wear out twenty bodies in ourselves.

'In days long before the acorn was dropped from which I sprang,' said my Talking Friend, 'my venerable father used to tell of one Austin Hammond, of Melam—the old name of Meole, on the Rea's banks—who had gathered together all sorts of traditionary lore about Pengwerne, or the Hill of the Alders. It was a long time, he said, before it arose to be a town of any consequence; and he used to say likewise that the *Wyle-Cop—Cop* meaning the same as *Pen*—was the earliest part of it which was inhabited, or at least made defensible. Standing as it does, it seems reasonable enough. But you can pick out these things from books, which I cannot, and I dare say know more about it.'

And first, I wondered how the old man came by the name of Austin, but readily concluded it would be not an uncommon name among the Christianised Anglo-Saxons. In-

deed, 'it was borne by more than one Shropshire landowner in the Confessor's time.' Next, when I had put together all the mixed accounts I had either heard or read relative to the modern Scrobbesbyrig, or Shrewsbury, I came to the conclusion that old Austin Hamon, or Hammond, must have been possessed of a great deal of information. At all events, the germ of what is contained in modern histories was to be found in his miscellaneous traditions. But before I proceed to speak of the old town's history more in detail I must give one of old Austin's legends, which I have never seen in print.

Have me excused if I speke amiss ;
My witte is gode, and, lo ! my tale is this :

The Legend of old Austin Hammond.

'"When I was a youth," said old Austin Hammond, "I lived in a place where was a spring of pitch"—probably,' my Talking Friend threw in, by way of parenthesis, 'the modern Pitchford—"and close by my father's home dwelt a man called Dudda, a very unlikable and hard-bitten man, and, as I recollect, a great terror to all of us as children. Associated with him in his transactions, which were more or less a secret, were one Crida, a Saxon like myself, and Lledig, a Welshman, equally disliked with Dudda.

'"Dudda had a daughter called Ida, or Idonea, and Lledig, said to have come from Garth Maclawch, in North Wales, had also a single daughter named, oddly enough, as being a Welshman, Esla or Elesa. These were their only children, whilst to Crida was born an only son called Cenred, five or six years older than Ida and Esla or Elesa.

'"Such were the members of this fraternity—for such it was—and they kept, in most things, totally distinct from the rest of us, except only in the matter of trade and barter. Not far off from Pitchford—I forget where—they had a kind of trysting-place on what was in those days called the Hafren, the ancient name, as you very well know, of the Severn; and to this spot came two or three times in the course of the summer rafts or floats containing goods of divers sorts, some saleable in the neighbourhood, some not: but, taken alto-

gether, there were wares for the people roundabouts, and the floats were looked for pretty much as, within your own recollection, were the common pedlars;" 'a people,' continued my Talking Friend, 'whom I very much liked, for beneath our branches they not only opened and compared their articles of commerce, but detailed all the news of the district. Indeed, they were to the neighbourhood, in this respect, what newspapers are to you.

'"All these persons, as is said above, had their nominal abode at Pitchford, as we may now call it; a very secluded spot, girt in almost entirely by scrub and forest, with now and then a *leg*, or *lega*, as our Saxon people called your low or meadow ground; but the head-quarters of their trading was Pengwerne, or Scrobbesbyrig. Here was, in fact, their mart, or market, and from hence they dispatched their goods here and there, as it suited their convenience or tended to their profit. Their stronghold in Pengwerne was a sort of primitive pier, near to a spot called Mardol"—an old name still retained, and about the meaning of which,' added my Talking Friend, still interspersing his own remarks with Austin Hammond's legend, 'I am told that antiquarians are very doubtful. And,' he added with a pleasant, rustling smile, 'you and your brethren know the locality well, for you could never enter Shrewsbury by Frankwell and the Welsh bridge without taking Mardol in your way.

'"For many years Dudda, Crida, and Lledig carried on their joint trade, and were supposed to be what were then called wealthy people; and of them money current with the merchant was always to be procured as well as goods. And this," old Austin would say, "I mention as a matter worth consideration, for, though goods were common and barter was a ready mode of dealing in those days, money was by no means common. What the people had they hoarded up and sometimes buried.

'"After a time Dudda died, leaving his daughter Ida to the charge of Lledig, the Welshman, and she and Esla or Elesa, Lledig's daughter, became like foster-sisters. It was a pretty sight, the neighbours said, to see these children of nature together; both so simple, so beautiful, and so attached.

If their fathers were not liked they were. Lledig, too, took great care that they should be adorned alike, and, rough as he was, it was his delight to deck their heads with the gold of his native land; for at that time much gold came from Wales and Ireland in the shape of torques, and rings, and antique crosses. In fact, almost the only gold known to our Anglo-Saxon race which did not come from Byzantium, under the name of bezants and byzantines, came from the mountains of Wales or else from Ireland.

'"On high days and holidays no such favourites entered Pengwerne by the Wyle—the upper portion of which, as before hinted, was the first part of the town inhabited by the Saxons—as Ida and Esla; and if *they* were looked up to, so also was Cenred, the son of Crida, who was their faithful squire and trusty companion upon all occasions. No common youth was Cenred, and the great dislike which was entertained for his father as well as for the memory of Dudda, deceased, and for Lledig, the Welshman, too, acted but as a foil for him. What added to the general approbation was the entire love and brotherhood which existed between him and the two lovely girls. However much occupied at other times, on these occasions they were never apart, and he was their guardian and protector. And then, again, in whatever sports he engaged in Pengwerne they, according to the simplicity of those days, encouraged him by their presence. And thus matters went on till the girls arrived at woman's estate. But shortly after that a great domestic trouble fell upon them all, for Lledig also fell sick and died within a few days.

'"For some time previously it was observed by Cenred, the son of Crida, that a great distrust had arisen in the mind of Lledig about his father, and it had been a source of much trouble to the generous youth; for, although he had penetration enough to see, uneducated as he was except by the world, that Lledig and Crida were both hard men and unscrupulous in their dealings, yet blood is thicker than water, as our old proverb says, and it did not become a son to dishonour his father. Whether Lledig had tried to make any private arrangements on his daughter's behalf was never known, but his death was as sudden as his sickness; and the two girls,

Ida and Esla, now devolved to the charge of Crida, in whom the prosperity of what you would call the guild or fraternity centred. And thus things stood for the present.

'"Probably Crida's trading rather increased than decreased, but with his additional stores there came a darker cloud upon his iron brow, and his heart was hardened. To Ida, the daughter of Dudda, he appeared to take a great dislike—and not only so, but, to the grief of Cenred's heart, he threw out insinuations against her sincerity. Whilst she seemed to be devoted to his son, it was evident enough, he said, that all her affections were centred on Oswy of Almond, a bold, fiery youth, ready for any mischief.

'"But this was only a vamped-up cause of offence; indeed, as far as was known, Cenred's affections, though he dearly loved them both, were settled on Esla, and, because Esla loved Ida as her own soul, he was the more irritated with his father, whose insinuations he knew to be false. Indeed, though respectfully, he had thrown back in his teeth the charge brought against Oswy of Almond; for, although he was a fiery youth, and bold as a lion, there was no mischief in him. One he was to repel a foe and to protect a friend, but to malice and any low, paltry motives he was a stranger. Moreover, if Ida had a softer feeling for Oswy, was he not one of all others to be encouraged? Between the Hafren and the Tern there was no one really more looked to as a man of character than he."'

Upon which my Talking Friend observed:—

'I have heard my time-honoured father say that there was an old tradition which reported that Oswy's forefathers had been concerned in the sacking and burning of Uriconium, or Wroxeter; but,' he added, 'it must have been a very, very long time ago, and he knew nothing in favour of or against the story. All he seemed to be certain about was, that Oswy was an inhabitant of Pengwerne, or, as you now call it, Shrewsbury.' And, having thrown out this little parenthetic notification, he proceeded with the legend of Austin.

'"From this time," continued the old man, "there was nothing else than distrust on the side of Crida. He clearly saw that Cenred, his son, sided with Ida and Esla, and, as his

affections were centred on the latter, he did all he could to advocate the cause of Oswy, whom he admired as a man, liked as a companion, and had full cause to know was a friend to him at heart.

'"This still further aggravated the selfish and cruel Crida, into whose avaricious heart it had now entered to secure the reputed portion of Ida's wealth for his son and for Esla. Even the thought of Cenred's indignation, should he discover such a base sentiment to exist in his mind, could not extinguish the foul idea; but thus it rankled and smouldered like a pent-up fire.

'"In those days, in the neighbourhood of what is now called Shelton, there was a remarkable oak overhanging the Severn"—not the present oak of historical association,' interposed my Talking Friend with a sort of apology—'"and under this oak tree, in something like a cave or a hut, there lived a wise woman, or a witch, called Ulrica, who had two sons, Alan and Ingil. To her the wicked Crida made application for a charm to destroy the beauty of Ida and, by degrees, her life. Horrid wretch as he was, he had not courage to attempt it himself.

'"Bought and sold by the offer of reward, this wicked wise woman, or witch of the Shelton oak, promises her help, but advises, in the first instance, that Ida's beauty should be tarnished, so as to disgust, if possible, the affectionate Oswy of Almond; and to this intent she gave to Crida a mixture which was to be put into the water she washed with. This, she said, would produce the *wip-poccum*"—such was the Saxon name, and it would appear in outward character to be something like our smallpox, though evidently not the same, as it was not catching—"and she added: 'After a time it will scale her face like a leper's, so that no spa water shall ever clear and purify it again.'

'"To the great dismay of Cenred and Esla, before long the lovely face of Ida became tainted with this loathsome affection, and, to a certain extent, her hands also, but not so much. Then it was that Crida expressed his fears for Esla, who had been committed to his care, and proposed that Ida should be sent to a small retreat for such maladies; for such retreats there were in those days as now, scrofulous diseases be-

ing more common than any other owing to want of cleanliness. As long as they could, Cenred and Esla opposed the scheme, for they said, 'We have no fears; why should we fear?' and they knew well enough that Oswy of Almond had none, for he had laughed at the fear, which he took to be a blind. It was, however, in vain, for Crida was absolute, and his will was law. Accordingly Ida was sent to an outlying spot" —somewhere, possibly, where the present St. Giles' stands,' interposed my Talking Friend, 'which was set apart for the same purpose in after years. "The order, however," said Austin Hammond, "that she was not to be visited was complied with neither by Cenred nor Esla, and certainly not by Oswy, over whom Crida could exercise no authority, and for whom, indeed, Oswy soon entertained a most thorough contempt, looking upon him only as a huckster and a low trader, and using another word which no Saxon ever used but under circumstances the most determined and for the best ascertained reasons.

'"As might have been expected, when out of baneful influence Ida soon recovered her beauty, which was more exquisite than ever; and it seemed as if her mind was as beautiful as her person, for, notwithstanding all Crida's cruel conduct, she never upbraided him by look or word. Such is the grandeur of noble natures! But this only racked and tantalised his base heart the more.

'"Then it was that Crida applied to the old witch of the Shelton oak once more, and she promised to drug him a posset with potent herbs and simples, under the influence of which her health and strength would dwindle away by degrees till she pined and died"—how the wicked wretch contrived to administer it old Austin could not tell, but he did so—"and, sure enough, by degrees her fair beauty *did* waste away, and Cenred and Ida, as well as Oswy, feared for the worst, and were at their wits' end.

'"It was about this time that Ulrica's two sons, Alan and Ingil, were engaged by Crida as assistants in manning his rafts and floats on the Severn; and, as Cenred was occupied constantly about the trading craft, he had the fullest opportunity of scrutinising their conduct. The more he saw of

them the less he liked them, and very soon he had sufficient cause for suspecting them ; but, as it happened, good came out of evil. Within a few months after they had been in the employ of Crida one of the rafts or floats fell to pieces in a flood under what we now call Leighton Shelf, and upon this occasion Cenred saved the life of Ingil when Alan was drowned. Him, too, he attempted to drag out of the water, but his strength failed him, and all he could do was to rescue Ingil. Half stupefied at the time, he only expressed his thanks in a surly sort of a way, and returned to his ill-favoured mother's, the witch, or wise woman of Shelton. After about a nine days' or a fortnight's absence he returned, but his manner towards Cenred was altered altogether. The half savage, under the shivering and the hot fits of an ague which ensued upon his ducking, had had time to think, and he had clearly come to the conclusion that, heathen as he was, his Saxon gods could never approve of his conduct ; and so one day as he and Cenred were employed about the floats, having restlessly looked round to see that Crida was not hovering near, he said in hurried speech, 'Cenred, noble Cenred, thank you for my life. Watch the fair Ida, watch her well ; for she is dealt very treacherously with. Forgive the plainness of my speech, but the *nithing* Crida is as wicked as my mother Ulrica. See that she never takes anything from Crida's hands if possible. Woden, the god of my fathers, look to you, and to Esla, and to Oswy. From this day forth you see my face no more. I quit the district and my evil ways for ever. Henceforth I will do as you have done. Help me, then, Lady Frija and our weird sisters of destiny, and I will go forth to save life, and not to destroy it.' Saying this he wrung Cenred's hand till the blood started almost from his nails, and then put into it a curious piece of gold, of a square shape, with something like a wheel inside it"—which,' said my Talking Friend, 'was no doubt an amulet or a talisman. "'I looked round for him,' said Cenred to Esla with emotion, 'but behold he was gone!'

'"And now," said old Austin, "what was to be done? Crida, his father, was their enemy—an utter *nithing*—with heart and hand ready to dabble in poison and in death. A blind man

might see," continued he, "that it was a most painful position for Cenred and Esla, to say nothing of Oswy; and much did Oswy pity the condition of his friend and tried to comfort him in his heavy trouble. For what so great a trouble to a true Saxon as to have a father that was a *nithing*?

'"However, they had nothing to do but to watch, and before long they had full cause to know that a connection was still kept up with the witch Ulrica of the Shelton oak. And thus it came about. More than once Ulrica had come to the house of Crida herself"—it appears to have stood,' put in my Talking Friend, 'somewhere about what is now called *Murivance*—"but, hard-hearted old crone, whilst in search of the sand-martins' nests on the sandbanks over the Severn,"—very numerous then,' he interposed again, 'as in the time of your boyhood, "the old beldame contrived to miss her footing and slipped down. But, as our old proverb says, 'nought need fear no harm,' and the worst that happened was the spraining of her ankle. However it hindered her bringing her simples personally to Crida, and she was obliged to use a little rough-haired, red-headed varlet of a boy to do her errands. He, with the cunning of an urchin trained by a hag—a regular devil's brat—slipped about here and there like an eel, seeking to deliver his little fardel in private. But he was watched too closely, and had to put into the hands of Cenred something wrapped up in the supple inner bark of the birch tree, which, on examination, seemed to be an impalpable grey dust"—what you and your brothers, no doubt, in your childhood called "*a powder*."

'"And so the warning of Ingil was not in vain, and the wickedness of the *nithing* Crida was patent. But here again what was to be done?

'"On this occasion it was thought better, on a quick consultation, to deliver it into the hands of Crida, and to await results. And so it was taken out of the little varlet's hands and put by till Crida's return in the evening.

'"But here came in a difficult point"—not so common in your days,' said the good Old Oak—'"and it was this. Medical practitioners were not then to be found as they are now in every town and village. In fact, *leech-craft* was uncommon,

and '*The Leech*,' as he was technically called, was a rare and seldom personage, and 'wise women' were more concerned with drugs in general than men;" a custom which has descended to even later days, when every good woman of the household (like your excellent grandmother) had her private still, her confectionery room, and her dried herbary. Not to be skilled in simples was to be, as you now speak antithetically, simple in another sense of the word. Accordingly the witch, or wise woman of the Shelton oak, had only sent the medicine for the house of Crida as an apothecary might have done in your days; and this, of course, was at once turned to account by the cunning *nithing*, though he was baffled in his villainy.

'"The hint conveyed by Ingil to Cenred was naturally communicated to Ida by Esla, and so came to the ears of Oswy of Almond. The result was, that Ida became cautious in what she took, and avoided all simples and distilled waters, and medicine, confining herself to the plainest and commonest food. Still the happiness of the girls was gone, and so was Cenred's, for suspicion could not sleep, knowing what they knew. One great satisfaction, however, all the three had, which was the entire health of Ida, and her beauty was matchless.

'"But, if suspicion did not sleep with them, we may be sure it did not with Crida, and his lost nature day by day grew worse. Peevish, testy, and bitter towards his son, he became acrimonious and abusive whenever he had occasion to see Oswy, and sometimes used low-muttered threats, not loud, but deep. With all this the generous nature of Oswy put up, but, with his spirit, it was hard to bear. But, as the old Saxon poet said, 'What will a man not bear for his lady love?'

'"It was a bitter, cold night, and Oswy had crossed the Severn in his coracle from what is now called Kingsland. As usual he visited the house of Crida, and spent the early hours with Cenred, Ida, and Esla. Some time during the evening he by accident threw down a favourite hirlas, or drinking-horn of Crida's, which was tipped with gold and a charmed crystal of Lledig's, which his copartner, deceased,

used to treasure because he had picked it up by the secret spring near the summit of Snowdon. This greatly irritated the *nithing*, and he spoke evil words, as usual, of Oswy, and wished he might never see him there again; and, strange to say, he never did. That very night when he left the house he followed him, as it transpired afterwards, and dodged his steps. Oswy, it seems, as usual crossed the Severn in his 'coracle,'" from that slope or slade in the ground, as I make out,' said my Talking Friend, 'which is now occupied by the avenue of the quarry nearest the Welsh bridge. "All that Oswy recollected," old Austin said, "was to have heard a plunge in the water; and the general supposition was, that the *nithing* Crida had followed him with the intent to murder him."'

'When I was a schoolboy at Mr. Case's, long before I went to the schools under Bishop Butler,' I here said to my Talking Friend, 'that deep water by the wicket close upon the path, leading from the Welsh bridge towards the nearest avenue, was called "THE DEAD WATER," meaning only, as I thought, a deep standing pool, which, after the whirling eddies just above, settled down into profound stillness. But was my boyish notion a wrong one? and did old Austin Hammond's legend attach to it? Was it so called after the drowned Crida?'

Upon which there was a rustling of the leaves on the Old Tree's top, and my valued and communicative friend replied:—

'I never heard that it was, but the guess is as good a one as most others, and traditions are not without their value locally. But, though I cannot help you to establish one, there it was, old Austin always maintained, that Crida was drowned; and as his body was never recovered—a very worthless body it was—the general opinion entertained was, that it had become entangled in the roots of the alders which at that time fringed the Severn's banks (giving, as you know, to the town its name of Pengwerne), and that they formed a kind of coffin for it better than it deserved. It is well known, he added, how the roots of the alder will shoot out into the stream, become foreshortened by the current, and then curl

in again towards the land. Thus, probably, was Crida's corpse drawn under the banks by the eddies, and so, if we may say of it, interred.

'"As might be expected, many inquiries were made about the end of Crida, but, as he was a man universally disliked, it was soon credited that he had either destroyed himself or was drowned; for it was known that he would wander moodily up and down the Severn's banks when his gloomy fits were on. Moreover his violence was known to all his neighbours, and they said pithily, 'No one either needs or wants him, but he will turn up some day, dead or alive, and to no one's comfort;' but their anticipations never came to anything, and he never did.

'"Naturally, no stone was left unturned by those who belonged to him—by Ida and Esla, and specially by his son Cenred, whom Oswy of Almond assisted to the utmost—but all in vain. Within a while, however, strange stories got abroad, and the people said (for the people, somehow or another, always pick up the floating knowledge which others do not) that 'the old witch of Shelton knew all about it;' but she was off her head, and maundered and wandered, and there was no relying now on what she said. Only this transpired, that she was very unhappy in her mind and constantly kept affirming in her cave to the women who came to visit her—more out of fear than love, it is expected—that she had done what she ought not to have done; and before she died she confessed that she had counselled Crida to evil, and that he, a wicked man, and a *nithing*, and a disgrace, and a reproach to those about him, had readily consented to do what was wrong."'

The latter portion of old Austin's legend is, perhaps, more interesting than the former; it at least shows what may be called the better side of heathenism.

'"What now is called Kingsland, over the Severn, was the property of Oswy. He, of course, married Ida; and of all the happy people in the district none had such a name as Ida and Oswy. Wild as the country was in those days, when the people saw them they blessed them, and they, in their turn, were a blessing to the people.

'"As regards long life, of Cenred and Esla the same happy history cannot be recorded. Generally, we hope, and trust, and know, the good are blessed; but since the Gospel dispensation has taught us better, we are better informed, and it is in patience that the best of men possess their souls. Now and then some of the very best people we know are, to outward appearance, the most unhappy. Their possession is not here—it is to be, as it were, on the other side Jordan by-and-by." All this I have learnt,' said my Talking Friend, 'since the priest of Hanwood taught me better things, and things accompanying salvation. "In sum, Cenred and Esla died young—beloving and beloved—but they left a name behind them never to be forgotten. St. Chad and the holy priests his brothers—Celin and Cymbel—always mentioned their names with a sort of veneration; and St. Alkmund, in after years, held their memory in the same high respect; and by the waters of Sutton Spa, and within the range of St. Giles', as we now call it, Esla was always held to be a saint. Living in the midst of heathendom, neither she nor Cenred lived heathenish lives.

'"On their death, strange as it may seem, all the property of Dudda, Lledig, and Crida centred in Ida and Oswy. All the floats of the Severn became theirs, and they made good use of their means. They were, in fact, the great benefactors to Pengwerne, or, as you call it now, Scrobbesbyrig, or Shrewsbury. By their help it began to grow and flourish.

'"But,"' continued my Talking Friend, '"all this time Oswy, too, and Ida were heathens. Good in their way, their way was not 'the way, the truth, and the life,' and they had still, in the way of humility, to learn what hitherto they had not learnt—that is to say, they had to learn what your Saxon forefathers at Meole had to learn—the more excellent way of Christianity under which darkness is turned into light."'

And the Old Oak's voice—I ought to say his leaves—faltered and shook with deep emotion, the usual rustling ceased, but at last, with a shivering of his crinkled bark and a trembling to his very roots, he said: 'Thanks to the priest of Hanwood, who has gone to his rest these years—some hundreds, I might say—my time-honoured father and

myself learnt many things which we never knew before. During all his younger years he swore by Woden, and I, as an oakling, swore by Woden, too; but now, except in the name of God, I never swear at all. Many a ribald jest and many an oath are uttered by the passers-by, but it distresses my heart of oak, and I grieve to hear any words unholy or profane.'

But to resume the thread of old Austin Hammond's legend.

'"The mingled fraternity at Pengwerne were now reduced to Oswy and to Ida. Those that were of the best died first, and such were Cenred and Esla, who departed," the old worthy said, "with nothing but blessing on their lips, if not in praying, in their Saxon way, which was scarcely ignorance, for Crida, and for Lledig, and for Dudda. In all of this there was something very touching.

'"And years passed on—thirty or more—and Pengwerne went on increasing, and the Severn changed its rafts and its floats for something more in the shape of the modern barge, and the people began to say, 'There's nothing like to Scrobbesbyrig.'

'"One day"—after the lapse of how many years old Austin said not—"there came to Scrobbesbyrig a very aged man: his hair was long, and his beard was full, and he was very lean and spare, and bent like a willow by the Severn's side. There was something very notable in his bearing, and as he entered the more modern Murivance the people drew up and gazed at him, and left off pulling or carding the rough wool of what seemed to be mountain sheep, and which, at that time, they made into the warm clothing of the country. All that could be got out of the aged wanderer was, that he wished to find the house of Cenred. 'Cenred,' said the Saxon nearest to him, 'is dead and gone this many a year; it's no use your hunting after him, old greybeard.' And the old man bowed the head and thought there was something of rudeness and rusticity, if not of irreverence, in the reply. Still he ventured to ask if any of his kindred remained. Something of suspicion came across the person appealed to, and he said, with hesitation, 'Oswy and Ida, of the scrub over Severn'—

that is, as before hinted at, the modern Kingsland—'are the only remnants of the old fraternity, and they, much loved as they are, are as old as thou art.' And the old man sighed with that deep sigh which is unmistakable, adding, 'Bless them for ever in the name of Christ!'

'"The stare of the heathen Saxon appealed to could only be compared to the impenetrable darkness of some blank wall.

'"But a man of determined will and purpose will rarely miss his ends; and the man here spoken of was intent and earnest, resolute and ready, though old. Accordingly, leaving Murivance, he descended towards the Saxon, and, finding an old man clothed in otter skin, and with something like dog-skin cap, and arms blue with the stain of the *woad*, fishing mid-stream, he hailed him and asked him to push in landwards and to lend him his coracle to cross with, and he could easily pull it back again with his rope of bark;" for it is to be recollected,' said my Talking Friend, 'that a coracle then, as now, was only intended to carry one.

'"There was something in the aged man not to be withstood, and the waterman acquiesced with a ready goodwill. A small coin was slipped into his hand before the stranger entered the cobble craft, and the fisherman, as was the custom, tied his coil of bark to one side of it, in order to haul it back again."' And I said the ropes of the modern ferry were only the remnant of the old bark coil. To think how many times I have been ferried over at the Boat House Bank or to Kingsland!

'Arrived at what you now call Kingsland, the long-bearded and austere man, as old Austin called him, sought out the residence of Oswy and Ida—comparatively small with modern buildings, clay-built (as from the red clay of Raddlebrook), and hedged in with holly, but neat and notable, and at once to be recognised as the home of no every-day common Saxon people.

'"In those days the arrival of a stranger was no common thing, and the inquiry made for Oswy and Ida was at once bruited abroad by its few inhabitants" over that space of ground where the "ARBOURS" stood in your boyhood. "Little

was said when the old man found the house, but the ready Saxon welcome was given, and the great-cake and the mead were drawn forth from the cupboard. For the moment no discovery was made; but, though the features were unknown, as is often the case, there was something in the voice which caused Oswy to start." A voice, I have often heard you say,' interposed my Talking Friend, 'will be recognised when all knowledge of the features has passed away; and so it was on this occasion.

'"Meanwhile it is to be recollected that, though excellent in their lives, Cenred and Esla, the departed, were yet heathen Saxons. Their life, indeed, had been spent in *advancing*, but none had come in their way to teach them that *better way* without which, as conveying the grace of the Holy Spirit, there can be no real, permanent, and lasting progress. 'But, because they were so good in their estate of heathendom, methinks,' said the good priest of Hanwood, 'they were accepted by Him who is no respecter of persons,' and he repeated beneath these boughs a verse from your holy Book which I have never forgotten; words put into the mouth of the widow of Tekoah, a wise woman—indeed, and not as the witch Ulrica—'*We must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him.*' Such were the words he repeated, and then he added, 'The lives of Cenred and Esla were, no doubt, a training onward, and if they, like Moses, did not enter the holy evangelical law, they were not unblessed, and it may be (I speak with reverence) God provided as their earthly reward better things for Oswy and Ida.'"'

But to pass on to the narrative, and to continue the thread of old Austin's legend, so often and yet, as above, so feelingly dwelt on by my Talking Friend.

'"After a while, when the meal was over and the old hospitalities of the forefathers of our race were complete, the question was put, 'Who art thou, thou aged man, and whence?' and the ancient bowed the head and wept.

'"Ida, always overflowing with the kindnesses of woman (how great is a woman in her compassions!), at once started

up from the settle, and spoke softly and low, and said with trembling and with tears, 'Weep not, stranger. We have more cause, perchance, to weep than thou hast. We have lost our nearest and our dearest. All are gone, and we are the last of our race.'

'"And the old man '*lifted up his voice and wept*,' to use the beautiful language of the Bible, '*till he had no more power to weep*.'

'"Then all at once a light flashed across the mind of Oswy, and he said, with an interrupted sob, like the strong man moved, 'Stranger friend, who art thou? The voice clearly is the voice of a friend, though the face and the features are as of one unknown. Speak, man, speak! Why comest thou hither to the house, if not of mourning, yet of long pent-up sorrow? Those she spoke of have been dead for long, long years, but we grieve over them as though they had but left us yesterday. They were the best of their race, and we loved them the best.'

'"And the aged man, whilst the tears trickled down his grey beard and to the skirts of his clothing, groaned deeply, and he said—

'"'In the Name of God, Amen!'

'"'What meanest thou, stranger? We have gods many and lords many, and yet we are not satisfied. Would we had that firm footing and that dear resting-place which Ida and I have sought for years, and have not been able to find!'

'"'His mercies are everlasting,' said the stranger, 'and He delighteth in mercy.'

'"And the voice once more struck Oswy forcibly. There seemed, sorrowful as the aged man was, to be music in it, and it was as the voice of a man attempered to angelic sounds, such as he and Ida had long dreamt of, and when they awoke to the every-day realities of life it was but a dream. And there was a thoughtful pause of some minutes. At last the old man said—

'"'Let us Pray!'

'"'Pray!' exclaimed Oswy and Ida in a breath, 'it is

what we have long been wishing to do aright, and have never yet had the power to do as we would. Our Saxon gods, many as they are, have never seemed to make answer to our prayers; we that want light are still in the dark.'

'And the old man repeated the LORD'S PRAYER. And, strange to say, their ears being opened, and their hearts attent, they followed him as you would do,' said my Talking Friend, 'in one of your churches now, and their spirits seemed to be revived. And presently, as their heart of hearts was suppled, and intenerated and chastened more and more, the sorrow-stricken man seized the occasion, and he said:—

'"'OSWY, IDA, the last of your race and the friends of CENRED and ESLA! have ye not recognised in prayer the poor, conscience-stricken, the some time heart-broken Ingil, the brother of Alan?'

'"And Oswy, native Saxon as he was, fell upon his neck and wept, and Ida wept with him for joy. And Ingil, thus encouraged, went on to say—

'"'I am indeed that Ingil on whom God has had mercy. On leaving Pengwerne at that sad time I fled I hardly knew whither, and was a wanderer and a fugitive on the face of the earth. At last, to cut a long and painful story short, I quitted the line of the Severn, and journeyed still towards the south, and after many days arrived at a forest of broom and whin, and not far off was a small town called *Leadlowe*, and by the Cymry *Dinam*, situated on the height near the confluence of two streams, whose names I forget. Here it was that I met with an elderly man whose ways were not my ways, but, finding me in trouble, he was kind to me and brotherly, and, finding me tractable, instructed me in the better way of Christ; and there for many long years I have lived in utter seclusion, labouring with my own hands and earning my bread. My friend and instructor died about ten years ago, and I succeeded to his place, and endeavoured, as a teacher, to imitate the kindliness of his nature. Only a week ago I found out that you were living in this place, and I determined, as I told my neighbours, that, if possible, before I died I would see your faces once more. Strange as it may

seem, it was by your means—for was not Cenred one of you?—that I was taught better things than heathendom; and, having learnt that the Christ of God is the only Saviour, my desire is that you should *know* at least, *if not be converted to, His knowledge* by the mouth of the unworthy Ingil.' And the old man added no more, but his tears were as the summer rains, soft and full.

'"Long before this Oswy and Ida were Christians *all but in name*, and it seemed a strange providence that Ingil, the brother of the drowned Alan, should bring them to that full knowledge which is the blessedness of the redeemed. But so it was, and thus good came out of evil, and Ingil returned no more to the place of the broom, and the whin, and the gorse, where he had dwelt for so long, but remained with Oswy and Ida till the day of his death. At the same time he never forgot his kindly neighbours, but sent them messages of peace, saying that he had found his old resting-place here, and was looking forward to his resting-place hereafter.

'"Oswy and Ida were at once converted to the faith in Christ. They had found at last what they had long been feeling for and seeking after, THE SAVIOUR of the world. And so, when they buried Ingil, they buried him in sure and certain hope, heaping over him neither cairn nor mound, but simply committing his dust to dust."' The place of his interment, old Austin Hammond said, was supposed to be in that portion of Pengwerne Powisa which we now know by the name of Old St. Chad's, but my Talking Friend said: 'It was but a guess, and no man knows of his sepulchre to this day. The legend only remains, but it was said that the best Christian blood in Mercia descended through the loins of Oswy and Ida.'

And I bowed the head and I thanked the Old Oak for the legend of Austin Hammond; and I thought with myself how blessed was the plain, simple faith and the humility of the Christianised but still untutored old man. I thought, moreover, of one who, when I was censorious or hard, poured all her precious balm upon my head and rebuked me so softly that the rock was smitten, and the tears flowed like the former and the latter rain, and my poor, hard-worked brain

was led to stillness, and rest, and tranquillity. And I, too, beheld the hand of the Lord in all this; and I said, as a penitent is privileged to say, with the deepest humiliation, and contrition the most thorough, and sorrow of heart which none but God knew of—

'GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER!'

One day—as my Talking Friend had often alluded to the subject—I asked him when it was that the coins were found at his roots. 'Quite in modern times,' was his reply, 'and before the great rebellion. To the best of my recollection, it was in the latter years of the first James. These, however, were not the first hoard of coins that was discovered here. My venerable father mentioned the fact more than once that a very considerable quantity had been dug up near his roots. It was in his latter days, and it pleased him to touch upon the subject. I very well recollect his stating that there were many small Saxon coins—*sceathas* and *stycas* —mixed together with Roman and Norman ones. They were found in a great crock, and it would seem as if it had been wrapped up in a sheep or a calf's skin.'

It was said in a former chapter that probably a portion of the coins found under the Old Oak's roots were buried there by Weallende Wulf, but it is evident that this could only refer to the earlier *treasure-trove*. It was upon the present occasion that my Talking Friend first of all told me in so many words that two hoards had been brought to light—one in his own and one in his father's days—who always maintained that there was more *real* coin in Britain, to say nothing of money *by weight*, than was generally supposed. And I bethought me of the old and modern terms '*expensa*,' '*impendia*,' '*expenses*,' which point one and all to the money of the merchant weighed out, and of Pliny's words—'*Et adhuc expensa in rationibus dicuntur: item impendia et dependere.*'

The following extract, from Sharon Turner's 'History of the Anglo-Saxons,' will show that his opinions coincided pretty much with those of the Old Oak.

'The progress of the Anglo-Saxons to wealth was accelerated by the previous civilisation of Britain. The Romans

had retired from it but a few years before their invasion, and had raised many temples and buildings in the island, and filled them with appropriate furniture, of which much remained to assist the ingenuity and excite the taste of the new conquerors. That gold and silver had abounded in the island while it was possessed by the Romans and Britons the coins that have been found at every period since, almost every year, sufficiently testify; and it was the frequency of these emerging to view which made treasure-trove an important point of our ancient laws, and which is mentioned by Alfred as one of the means of becoming wealthy. In the earliest Anglo-Saxon laws almost all the penalties are pecuniary, in silver coin. That bullion was not deficient in the country, but was continually increasing, appears from the numerous instances of purchase-moneys given in gold and silver, either coined or by weight, for lands, of which the charters still remain. By the quantities of money given to buy land for a monastery, by one bishop and by its first abbot, it would appear that the Church and monasteries had abundance of it; and, indeed, the pecuniary payments appointed for them, besides their tithes and presents, gave them great facilities of acquiring it, as the fines and gafols poured still more into the royal exchequer. The great quantity of payments recorded in Domesday Book, as due to the king, in pounds, shillings, and pence, from the various subdivisions of lands in every county, showed both the diffusion and the abundance of bullion among the Anglo-Saxons.'

No doubt there will always be a question amongst antiquarians as to *living* and *dead*, *nominal* and *real* money. Perhaps some such summary as the following may be nearest the truth. As before hinted, the *living money* of the Anglo-Saxons was literally *pecunia*—cattle of all sorts, to say nothing of slaves, which the Church, willing to discourage slavery, would not accept in payment. Where *coin*, or *dead money*, was scarce, *living money*, or, as we might call it, *barter*, was the common way of dealing. The nearest approach to this in modern days is in dealing, as it is called, *in the trade*, where little money need pass.

It seems to be admitted that the Saxon invaders robbed

the Britons of their Roman money and introduced their own, which was of the German stamp and die—at least what we should now call German. But the Saxons had to deliver up their coin in their turn, and the quantity of Ethelred the Unready's coins, says Dr. Oliver, in his 'History of the City of Exeter,' in the museum at Stockholm bespeaks the ransom-money which was carried back by the slaves.

As may be collected from what has been said before, it is now very generally admitted that the Britons had a coinage, however rough and rude, previous to the arrival of Cæsar. His words, therefore, must be understood with some limitation: '*Utuntur aut ære, aut taleis ferreis ad certum pondus examinatis pro numero.*' Mr. Hawkins, in his 'Observations upon British Coins,' has observed that the rudest British ones are certainly without any letters, and that the introduction of Roman letters upon the coins is coincident with the improvement of the workmanship, till it attained its highest perfection under Cunobeline (who flourished under Augustus and Tiberius), 'immediately after which I imagine the genuine British coinage to have ceased, and to have been superseded by that of Rome.' There is probably no truer surmise than this.

According to my Talking Friend's information, no very early British coins were dug up under his time-honoured father's roots, with the exception of the still uncertain '*Tascio*' or '*Tascia*,' one of which he said was picked up, with its field filled with strange devices, outside the crock. Besides this, there were some three or four '*Cunos*,' or '*Cunobelines*,' and half-a-dozen *wheel* specimens, very much worn—insomuch so that the priest of Hanwood could only make them out, but under a large magnifying-glass, which was sent him from Venice, and which he very much prized, as he did some *galley-pence*—so called because originally brought by the Genoese *galleys* in the time of Edward III. Where did not the Genoese penetrate? How surprised we were to find their names fresh in the Crimea! Though more common on the coins of Massilia, or Marseilles, there is no doubt that the wheel was likewise found on British coins—as were the horse and the *car*, of which the *wheel* seemed to be the in-

artistic remnant, suggesting to my mind old Andrew Marvel's words :—

> But at my back I always hear
> Time's wingèd chariots hurrying near ;
> And yonder all before me lie
> Deserts of vast eternity.

One thing my Talking Friend told me with the utmost decision, which was this: 'No *iron rings*' (such as described by Cæsar) 'have ever been found in this district.' Whether he thought it an indignity when I referred to them I cannot say, but his heartship of oak was evidently offended. As is well known, it is in Ireland that rings have been generally found, though not of iron, but of brass and gold. Well, well! So it is, and so it will be till the end of time.

> Fuit in pretio magis æs, aurumque jacebat . . .
> Nunc jacet æs, aurum in summum successit honorem.

As before noted, there are in existence Anglo-Saxon coins, struck in Shrewsbury, belonging to Athelstan, Edgar, Ethelred the Unready, Canute, Edward the Confessor, and Harold; but none of these were found at the foot of the Old Oak. They may be seen in private collections and in the British Museum, and are engraved for the well-known 'History of Shrewsbury,' so often referred to.

'The treasures of time lie high,' says Sir Thomas Browne, in his 'Hydriotaphia,' 'in urns, *coins*, and monuments, scarce below the roots of some vegetables;' and he presently adds, 'The ancient custom of placing coins in considerable urns and the present practice of burying medals in the noble foundations of Europe are laudable ways of historical discoveries in actions, persons, chronologies, and posterity will applaud them.' To these remarks we must add the various heaps of treasure-trove and such lost current coin as is always found in after ages, whether on the sites of old cities or scattered up and down the land, wherever the different possessors for the time being had their occupation.

Hence are turned up at Wroxeter the old Roman denarii —corrupted by the common people from the more modern *denier* into '*dinder*'—and numbers of the small coins of the

Constantine family of emperors. Lately, too, as the excavations proceeded, a coin of Domitian was turned up, and amongst many others some *minimi*, which may be seen engraved in Wright's 'Celt, Roman, and Saxon.' These he supposes 'to have been struck during the period between the abandonment of the island by the imperial government and the establishment of the Saxon kingdoms;' and he adds in another page, 'The very small comparative number of *minimi* found in circulation in so important a town would seem to show that this coinage was quite recent when Uriconium was destroyed.' My Talking Friend had seen none of these *minimi*, neither had his venerable father; but the term 'Wroxeter dinder' was as familiar to them as the low, suppressed little bark of the squirrel or the dormouse when revelling on their acorns.

In passing on to mention the Saxon coinage, it may be observed here that Roman coins have been found in Britain from the consular series till they abandoned the island. The greatest number discovered attach to the names of Carausius, Allectus, Constantine the Great, Constantine II., Constans, Constantius II., Valens, and Gratianus.

From the time of Claudius downwards Roman coins pointed to the conquest of our island, with the inscription DE BRITANN, or, as on Hadrian's large brass coin, ADVENTVS AVG BRITANNIAE. 'The same emperor commemorated his exploits by another coin, bearing on the reverse a figure of a female seated on a rock, holding a spear on her arm, with a shield resting by her side, and the inscription BRITANNIA. There are several different coins of Hadrian with this device, from which they are usually known as the Britannia types, and similar coins were struck under Antoninus Pius; but in the latter the figure is more frequently a male than a female. It is from these Roman coins that the figure of Britannia was taken for our modern English mintage.'

It seems to be now pretty generally admitted that all our early Anglo-Saxon coinage was imitative, derived from the Greeks and the Romans, and, oddly enough, whilst Roman *inscriptions* were adhered to, our forefathers stuck to the

devices of the Greeks, particularly to those of the Macedonian kings. Certainly in the Saxon moneyers there was little invention.

But if the Anglo-Saxons copied from the Romans, whence came the great dissimilarity in their coinage? Perhaps 'Akerman's Numismatic Manual' gives a fair and reasonable answer: 'The Saxon artists were incapable of executing more perfect pieces, and evidently stamped their dies upon circular pieces of silver previously punched out. When they attempted a portrait the effigies on the coins of the lower empire served them for copies, which they travestied in a most barbarous manner. The thinness of the flange of metal rendered it impossible to produce a bold relief, and this gave to many specimens of the Saxon money an appearance wholly dissimilar to that of the former occupiers of Britain. As regards the *weight* of the Saxon money, it would be difficult to show that it does not assimilate to that of the lower empire after the abandonment of Britain by the Romans. The denarius of the time of Honorius weighs, on an average, 48 grains, and its half, the victoriatus, if we may judge from its being by no means uncommon at this day, must have been in very common use. From this latter coin the Saxons, in all probability, adopted their penny, which, as shown by the authorities quoted by Ruding, should weigh 24 grains.' Hence the term pennyweight.

Thinking it not unlikely that my Talking Friend could give me some information about the Saxon coinage, I asked him if any early ones had been found under his father's roots, or if he had heard his father speak upon the subject. His reply was, that a few *sceathas* and *sticas* were all he ever heard him speak of as found there—the former of silver, the latter of brass. Upon another occasion he said that his venerable father had seen some of Athelstan's and Canute's pennies, and he would talk of one of Edward the Confessor's, on which that king was represented at full length, seated on his chair of state and holding the globe and sceptre. He had likewise seen one of Alfred's pennies, with the large monogram of LONDONIA, but of the pennies of Regnald and Anlaf, with the Saxon CVNVNC for *rex* he had never heard.

On referring again to the first treasure-trove, and on my observing that very few Saxon coins seemed to have been found in the old crock, my Talking Friend said that in the mention of Saxon money his old father was very indistinct, and that he seemed constantly to confound current coin, or real money, with nominal money, or money of account. 'The mixed terms he used in his common conversation were the pound, the mark, the mancus, the ora, the shilling, the thrimsa, the sceatha, the penny, the halfling, or halfpenny, the feorthling, and the stica—names with which you, as a Saxon scholar, are sufficiently familiar, but out of which even you do not see your way' for the subject is as thick-set with difficulties as was the *scrub*, or *scrobbe*, which led hence, in my father's early days, to Scrobbesbyrig, or Shrewsbury.'

And I bethought me how much I had read upon the subject, and how little, after all my reading, I really knew; and I looked to my notes, bristling with references to early and late Saxon scholars—to Somner, and Lye, and Manning, and Hickes, and Sharon Turner, and Bosworth, and Kemble—comparing their knowledge with my old readings in Schiller, and Ihre, and Wachter, who necessarily had to dive into Anglo-Saxon, and to my kind helpers Professor Rock and Erasmus Müller (now with God !), and I said, 'A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, but perhaps it is worse where there is none;' but I turned to better words, and I saw their truth, '*Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.*'

Referring to the *sceatha*, my Talking Friend told me he had often heard his venerable father refer to the old proverb, '*Ne sceat ne scilling*,' by which was meant, 'I owe thee neither little nor much'—neither *sceat*, which was the smallest, nor *scilling*, which was the largest silver coin then in use. We still retain the name of this coin in the phrase of *paying your shot, scot-free, shot, clog*, and perhaps in some others.

I may add here that the Old Oak always spoke of the shilling as real money, just as he did of the penny, the halfpenny, the farthing, and the styca. It would seem as if the latter was in great use, though others maintain that it

was local in its circulation, and that it was struck only in the Northumbrian mint, and by the Archbishops of York. Probably this explanation is too limited. At all events, in the Anglo-Saxon version of St. Mark xii. 42 the two mites (*minuta*), which make a farthing, were called *stycas*. My Talking Friend knew the *styca*, and described it as a very small brass or copper coin, but if he ever chanced to mention the *mark* he would say it was not Anglo-Saxon, but Anglo-Danish. I believe it is first mentioned in the articles of agreement between Alfred and Guthrun.

In opposition to the Old Oak's opinion about the shilling, Bishop Fleetwood says, in his 'Chronicum Pretiosum,' that 'a small plate would hold the coins of silver of 500 years,' and that, common as the word shilling 'is in old books and all accounts, yet there never was, that appears, any piece of silver of that denomination coined in England till the year 1504.' Indeed, till about 1544 the silver money of England consisted of groats, half-groats, pence, half-pence (called of old mails), and farthings. He states in another passage, 'The Anglo-Saxons had but one silver coin among them, and that was a penny;' so that on this head the Old Oak and the good bishop would have been altogether at issue. Indeed, we now know very well that there were silver *sceathas*.

On one occasion I asked my Talking Friend if he had ever heard his venerable father speak of any offerings made by old folk to time-honoured trees. He did not call to mind that he had. My question originated from what I had seen in Scandinavia on St. John's Night, and from a passage I had recently read in one of H. Marryat's amusing volumes. 'In the priest's garden at Dahlem, in Götland, stands an ancient oak, looked upon as holy. Bishop Walin mentions how in the last century old men still went out to pray beneath these aged trees; why they knew not—'twas a custom of their forefathers. Even now the priest of Dahlem finds *small copper coins*, placed as offerings, within the hollowed trunk of this decaying oak, relics of pagan superstitions.'

And thus, having disposed of the treasure-trove of the

elder oak, I will endeavour now to put together what my Talking Friend told me of the coins which were discovered in his days; modern ones he called them, as there were none later than the days of James I., unless, possibly, some few pack-horse coins, such as may be seen in the Guildhall collection.

It has been before hinted that my Talking Friend, as well as his father before him, was fond of discussing coins; probably from the very cause of treasure-trove having been twice brought to light within the reach of their shade. A common subject of conversation was the debasement of the coin of the realm about the time of his father's death: that is to say, towards the latter days of Edward III., or, as I suppose, something before, for I am inclined to think that the lines following, from Piers Ploughman, were written as early as Edward II.'s reign. The allusion is to the imitation of the English penny struck at Luxemburg—referred to likewise by Chaucer, in the 'Monk's Prologue,' and quoted by Akerman. I prefer taking Piers Ploughman's words from Wright's edition, though my old notes are from Whitaker's.

> As in Lussheburwes is a latter aloy
> And yet loketh he like a sterlignes,
> The merk of that money is good,
> As the metal is feeble.

I need not here enter on the meaning of the word sterling, whether derived from *easterling* (as Camden thought) or not. At one time, certainly, it meant a *pennyweight*, 'because,' said Fleetwood, 'it signifies a penny of pure silver, which is now called *standard*.' Once, and once only, in his Sacred monetary researches Fleetwood found *sterling* for ½. Sterling probably referred to the moneyers who lived *eastward* of ourselves, and introduced the art of refining silver.

The account my Talking Friend gave me of the mixed coins of the more recent treasure-trove was very desultory. There were several, he said, of the earlier Norman kings like those found under his roots, together with many medals and mixed pieces. He mentioned many halfpence of Richard II., and said that the proverb '*Il perdra son denier*' lost its pith by their coinage, and that previous to it many a penny was

expended when a halfpenny or a farthing would have paid the cost. Of such value is small change, like the *sticas* of our Saxon forefathers. No coins of Henry IV. or V. were found, which, considering the battle of Shrewsbury, is remarkable. Perhaps it was owing to the scarcity of silver money at that time. There were many groats and half-groats of different reigns; of Edward III. not a few, and many of Henry VI.; but the great find belonging to this reign was that of several nobles, half-nobles, and quarter-nobles, together with an angel and an angelet, all of which, said my Talking Friend, were purchased by a travelling pedlar, and were never heard of more.

A rose, or rose-noble of Edward IV. was another precious coin he used to discourse about; but it was not found, he said, under his roots, but was in the possession of his friend the priest of Hanwood, who likewise had informed him that it was not in the reign of Edward IV., but in that of Edward III., that the words DEI GRATIA, which occur in the Introduction to the 'Day of Ira,' first appeared on English *coins*; before this they were only on the great seals of the Norman kings. His friend, the priest, had also a groat of Henry VII., with an escalop-shell on it, which probably came from the abbey at Shrewsbury or from Wenlock—still telling of palmers and pilgrimages—but it was of the shillings of Henry VII. of which he spoke as the greatest rarities. No doubt, owing to the debased issues of Henry VIII.'s days, they were consigned to the melting-pot. As to the new name for the shilling in that king's reign, viz. *testoon*, he said there was really nothing new about it; it was simply derived from the French word *tête*, as the common term *penny* was from *pen*, a head.

Several crown pieces of Henry VIII., some shillings and sixpences of Edward VI. were found in the treasure-trove, as well as a groat or half-groat, which seemed to have a cap upon it—very likely the identical cardinal's cap which was one of the charges against Wolsey. Quantities also of brass or copper tokens were discovered, but so worn and corroded that nothing could be made of them. Besides these there was a groat of Queen Mary's, on which were the words, *Veritas temporis filia*, and one of those very rare coins, called

the *billing* half-crown of Philip and Mary, alluded to by Butler in his 'Hudibras':—

> Still amorous, and fond, and billing,
> Like Philip and Mary on a shilling.

There were many of Elizabeth's coins also; the common shilling, but not the *milled* one, was amongst the number; but no other coins, as far as I can recollect, later than the early days of James I. As before stated, they were found in a crock.

It may be added that my Talking Friend perfectly well recollected the term '*guinea*' coming in (it was in 1663), in the place of '*broads*,' or '*broad-pieces*.' The priest of Hanwood—he and his father before him were always on the best of terms with the successive priests of the parish, though they stood really in the parish of Pontesbury—told him that guineas took their name from the gold brought from Guinea by the African Company; and the good man had in his possession an angel of Charles I., with a hole bored through it, which he said was called a '*touchpiece*,' because it was usual to hang it round the necks of those who had been touched for the king's evil.

And thus much for the coins that were found beneath the roots of the Old Oak and of his father before him, showing how common it was at all times to bury money.

It always pleased the Old Oak to speak of the hospitality of ancient days, and my Talking Friend referred to those times with equal delight. No wayfarer was ever turned from the door, nor was the object of anyone's visit too closely inquired into—never, indeed, till his hunger and thirst were appeased. If the fare was simple the welcome was hearty. Very probably the cakes done hastily on the hearth were no better than the *dampers* Commander Mayne fed on in Vancouver's Land, and on his journeys in Columbia, and meat was a rare luxury; but at every Saxon board there was enough, and, as Juvenal expresses it, when nothing else is to be got, hard fare and a kind reception supplant dainties—

> Ventre nihil novi frugalius.

The earliest drink he recollected was mead, or metheglin.

Another medicinal one was compounded with the berries of the mountain ash—still, I believe, used in North Wales, as it was in my boyhood. Beer was also a native drink, but ale was of more recent introduction. I don't know what drink it was which Becket in later days took with him into France, and which the French were very fond of, but all round the Old Oak, as well as all round the Wrekin, was celebrated for fine, clear beer and ale. Hanwood, and Cruck Meole, and Pontesbury, and the whole course of the Rea were notorious for what would now be called their *tap*, and the weary wanderer was never sent away unrefreshed. There was no separate drink in those days, and the same was offered to high and low indiscriminately; in Mr. Borrow's words, in his Welsh work, it was 'ale such as farmers, and noblemen, too, of the good old time—when farmers' daughters did not play on the piano, and noblemen did not sell their game—were in the habit of offering to both high and low, and drinking themselves.' Boniface's description of his ale in the 'Beaux' Stratagem' might very well apply to some still to be found in the neighbourhood: ''Tis smooth as oil, sweet as milk, clear as amber, and strong as brandy.' Mr. Borrow would not despise such *clean drink*.

For ypocras, and spiced drinks, and the wines of France, which were very early introduced, the Old Oak had little taste. My Talking Friend even, who had become more used to the Norman, never spoke of them with much favour. Indeed, he had always observed that the pilgrims that visited the altar at Shrewsbury, and passed his way, usually praised the *ale*, not the *wine*, of the refectory.

The reader may have noted in several conversations that my Talking Friend and his father before him were great observers of the weather and of occurrences in the heavens. Amongst other things the Old Oak had to tell how, when Ethelred was hallowed king at Kingston, strange sights were seen. And if the reader will only turn to the Saxon Chronicle, under A.D. 979, he may read for himself: 'In the same year was seen oftentimes a bloody cloud, in likeness of fire; and it was most apparent at midnight; and was coloured in various rays. Then, when it was about to dawn, it glided away.'

Oddly enough, the great increase of the sea mentioned in the same chronicle had reached, as news, as far inland as Shropshire, which I suppose must be accounted for by the Severn's running through the county. 'In this year,' that is, A.D. 1014, 'on St. Michael's Mass eve (September 28) came the great sea-flood widely through this country, and ran up as far as it never before had done, and drowned many oaks, and of mankind a countless number.' The great storm of wind, mentioned likewise in the same chronicle under the year A.D. 1039, visited Shropshire, and did great injury. 'It came roaring up from Habberly Hill,' said the Old Oak, 'like unremitted cracks of thunder; and, though the fire of heaven did not strike me, the wind so tore my branches that I was years in recovering its effects.'

But time and space would fail me in recounting the matters the Old Oak used to dwell upon as regarded Saxon times. I must therefore cut the matter short by attending only to one history which he constantly refers to—that is to say, to the history of St. Dunstan, of whom he had learnt to think as a very remarkable man, and would say to his son, 'I wonder what Tredithic would have thought of him!'

At the first flush I could not quite make out how the venerable Oak came to know anything about him, but my Talking Friend set me to rights on this head, and moreover showed me that he had formed his own opinions about him, irrespective of the entirely opposite ones of his friend the priest of Hanwood in those days, to whom the Old Oak was greatly attached, and was delighted whenever he came and sat beneath his hospitable shade, and talked with the few that could talk with him.

My Talking Friend told me that the priest from whom his father drew his information was called Peter, which probably pointed to Rome, but he said that his real name was Ebb, and that he was a native of the valley of the Rea, to which beloved spot he had returned after having received a foreign education. How he got there my Talking Friend never informed me, but he knew the south of France well, and had been at Rome, and had profited by the school of

Ina, who died there, after having founded a college, and built a church adjoining to it, where the Saxon might worship, and hard by which he might bury his dead.

The curious point in the history is, that Peter, though a zealous priest and a good man, was inclined always to favour the regulars, whereas the Old Oak and the priest of Pontesbury sided entirely with the secular clergy. Thus the opinions formed by the father of my Talking Friend were, at best, passions; as he certainly had a very high opinion of Dunstan, whilst he as certainly disapproved of the Benedictine rule, as did the priest of Pontesbury. At the same time, as above recorded, the priest of Hanwood was his great friend.

'It was something less than a century and a half before the Norman came over,' said the Venerable Oak, 'that this remarkable man was born; and the Welsh, as my friend the priest of Hanwood informed me (good man, how he loved to coze under my shade!) would speak of his birthplace under the name of Inyswytryn, or the Glass Island,' the modern Glastonbury, and the Invala Avalonia of the Romans. 'His uncle Adhelm was Archbishop of Canterbury, and another of his uncles, Elphege of Winchester, had the greatest influence in the turn of his life, and character, and future fortunes.' But I said to myself, as I listened, he must under any circumstances have been a great man; for—

> The minde, and not the man, dooth make or marre;
> For, as the stearne doth guide the Argosy,
> So by their mindes all men they guyded are.
> From out the minde proceedeth fantasie;
> All outwarde actes, vertue, or vanitie,
> Not from the man, but from the minde proceede;
> The minde dooth make the man to do eache deede.

Of the great power of Dunstan's mind there never was any doubt from first to last. He was the prototype of the Becket of after years, and as great if not a greater man.

But I must recollect that I am not writing his life; I am only jotting down what my Talking Friend told me on his father's and the priest of Hanwood's authority.

'Amongst other things'—truly or not, my Talking Friend

did not know—'there were monks of St. Patrick from Ireland at Glastonbury who eked out their small means by educating the children of the nobles; and Dunstan, himself not ignobly born, was one of their pupils. As he was unequal, from bodily infirmity, to deeds of daring, the old wooden church of Glastonbury was the place of all others to attract his notice; for, though sickly in body, the mind was active and keen, and, as is often the case under such circumstances, there was a great deal of romance, as well as of superstition, in his nature. "Unquestionably clever, and ambitious as clever, he seemed," said the priest of Hanwood, "to have combined in one the talents of architect, sculptor, musician, and painter; and, as for the world without, so struck was it with his marvellous talents that it dubbed him alchemist, magician, and conjurer, and his cleverness taught him to make the best of the world's ignorance. Gifted," continued the priest of Hanwood, "with what the old Greeks called ἐγγαστριμυθία, he was no mean ἐγγαστρίμυθος, and could fling sounds at will;" and he instanced the voice from the crucifix at the Council at Winchester. "Ventriloquism," he would add slily, "was to him a sort of stock-in-trade."' Whether the stories which are told of his musical talents had anything to do with ventriloquism my Talking Friend had never heard. All that the priest of Hanwood said on this point was, that his uncle Adhelm introduced him to Athelstan's Court, and the king was as much delighted with his skill as Saul was with David's. But his popularity at Court brought upon him the envy of the Saxon nobles, and he was disgraced, and presently retired to Glastonbury, the place of his birth.

Wherefrom I called to mind that there were some chronological difficulties about this visit to Athelstan's Court, but I could not but recollect the raciness of old Fuller's account, who follows, in mistakes and all, the Life by Osbern.

'It is given to that bowle which lies next to the mark,' says this delightful old writer, 'to have most take aim to remove it. Eminency occasions envy, which made Dunstan's enemies endeavour to depress him. He is accused to the king for a magician, and upon that account banished the Court. It was brought as evidence against him that he made

his harp not only to have motion, but make music of itself, which no white art could perform.

> St. Dunstan's harp fast by the wall,
> Upon a pin did hang-a;
> The harp itself, with lie and all,
> Untouch'd by hand did twang-a.

For our part, let Dunstan's harp hang there still, on a double suspicion twisted together: first, whether this story thereof were true or false; secondly, if true, whether done by magic or miracle. Sure I am, as good a harper, and a better saint than Dunstan was, hath no such miracle reported of him, even David himself, who, with his harp, praised God, pleased men, frightened devils, yet took pains with his own right hand to play, not lazily commanding music by miracle to be made on his instrument.'

Whereupon I fell a-thinking again. How was it possible that the priest of Hanwood—whom the venerable Oak always represented as not only an able, but a good man—could stand up for Dunstan, who, 'upon the statement of his own friends and accomplices, may be regarded as a complete exemplar of the monkish character in its worst form.' And after much consideration I came to the conclusion that it was because he was a good man that he did so; and, as I said before, he had a leaning towards the regulars. It was on another occasion that my Talking Friend confirmed me in my views, showing clearly why his venerable father, as well as the priest of Hanwood, admired Dunstan, though they might not, probably, think his character a lovable one, or approve of all his actions. Between *heart of oak* and his *firmness* there was a similarity.

The worthy Peter, or Ebb, as my Talking Friend would sometimes call him, lived in troublous times, and he constantly lamented, his aged father told him, that the clergy generally were below the mark, and did not strive to raise the standard of the people around them. Whatever might have been the ambitions or the worldly views of Dunstan, he was quite aware of this, and one fixed determination of his was to reform the Anglo-Saxon Church. None could say it did not need reformation—least of all the good priest of Hanwood.

Bad as things were before the ravages of the Danes, they had become much worse since, and whoever would come forward and mend the gap would certainly be a general benefactor. This Dunstan attempted to do, and it was for this that the priest of Hanwood and the venerable Oak took his part.

'It never appeared, as far as I could make out,' said my Talking Friend, 'that the priest of Hanwood was a regular, though he sided with the regulars to a great extent; but Sithric of Pontesbury was a secular to the backbone, and many were the arguments the two held beneath the Old Oak's shade about Dunstan, and Monbury, and the Benedictines, now first introduced. One of the priest of Hanwood's favourite questions was, "If Dunstan were not a man of note and character, would the good Chancellor Turketul ever have supported him?" and Sithric of Pontesbury always admitted Turketul of Croyland to be such, and greatly reverenced his memory. But he never gave in on other points, and he regretted that Edmund ever made Dunstan Abbot of Glastonbury, simply because it gave him the opportunity of introducing there the rule of St. Benedict. If St. Augustine brought Benedictines to Canterbury, it was Dunstan who freshened and increased their power and their numbers throughout the length and breadth of the land.' In all this he is said to have been supported by Odo, Archbishop of Canterbury, 'building such structures,' says old Fuller, 'which impoverish posterity to repair them.'

Of Edred, Edmund's successor, my Talking Friend said nothing, but his venerable father used to tell the sad tale of Edwy and Elgiva; and he spoke of Edgar as entirely under the hands of the monks, though, at the same time, he would have it, *malgré* his faults, that he was one of the greatest of the Anglo-Saxon kings, as well as one of the most powerful.

To return to the venerable Oak's recollection of St. Dunstan's days.

'Instructed by the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury's discussions,' said my Talking Friend, 'he could recollect how the contest began between the secular and regular clergy; but, as said before, all his prepossessions were with the former, who conformed to no monastic rule, but lived like

those who were followers of St. Buil of old time. As for Dunstan's introduction of the stricter rule of Benedict of Nursia, much as he approved of the reformation of the clergy generally, he could not away with it; and he maintained that he had great cause to abide by what he said, for Sithric, the good priest of Pontesbury, whose little daughter Effy was the pet of the neighbourhood, had told him that the celibacy of the clergy would lead to all sorts of evil;' and my Talking Friend added that he, who had lived through the days of the Reformation, could testify to the fulfilment of Sithric's words.

Dunstan, the first Benedictine abbot, took the monastic vows at Fleury, near Rouen, in Normandy. In Archdeacon Owen's words—'A rule, chiefly composed from that of St. Benedict, but mixed with the customs of the ancient monks, was first introduced into the kingdom by St. Dunstan, Abbot of Glastonbury, in the year 946; and he endeavoured with the assistance of St. Oswald, Archbishop of York, who himself had been a Benedictine in France, to render it universal in England. The secular clergy opposed the innovations with vigour, but the strict seclusion, the higher degrees of sanctity, and, above all, the vows of rigid celibacy which the reformed monks assumed, gained by degrees such influence over the public mind that the seculars lost ground, and the Benedictines became the general favourites of this, as they had long been throughout every other country of Europe. At the Norman Conquest they were in possession of almost all the richest abbeys in the kingdom.'

In the present day, when Anglo-Saxon literature and old chronicles have been more closely examined, the opinion of the Old Oak, as to the reformation attempted, if not brought about, by Dunstan, seems pretty much acceded to. For instance, Soames says, in his 'Anglo-Saxon Church': 'There can be no doubt that Glastonbury's great abbot was able and sincere, though fanatical and ambitious. Nor can the Benedictine order be denied respectful consideration. It stands upon far higher ground than the heterogeneous mass of begging friars and unprofitable monks by which the papal reign was gradually overspread.'

Dr. Hook, in his 'Life,' is evidently of the same opinion

as to the two parties who have weighed Dunstan's life in the balance. 'The one party has endeavoured to elevate an unscrupulous politician to the pedestal of a saint, and the other has degraded the character of one of the greatest statesmen our country has produced, by asserting their suspicions as facts.' Such is the Dean of Chichester's opinion; but he is very guarded in his view of what happened at Calne, thus alluded to in the 'Saxon Chronicle,' A.D. 978: 'In this year all the chief "witan" of the Angle race fell at Calne from an upper floor, except the holy Archbishop Dunstan, who alone was stayed upon a beam; and some there were sorely marked, and some did not escape with life.' Fuller remarks: 'On which occasion some conceived that Dunstan, who had so much of a smith, had here something of a carpenter in him, and some device used by him about pinning and propping the room;' an opinion which has been very generally embraced.

Sharon Turner's view, on the whole, is not so favourable as Dr. Hook's, and perhaps not so unfavourable as Southey's. For these, severally, the reader is referred to the 'History of the Anglo-Saxons,' 'The Book of the Church,' and the 'Vindiciæ.' Hume's remark is simply a sarcasm. 'These circumstances, instead of begetting any suspicion of contrivance, were regarded as the surest proof of the immediate interposition of Providence in behalf of these favourites of heaven.'

The time-honoured Oak seems to have known nothing of the legends attached to St. Dunstan's name. Most of them were probably the invention of a later age. The notable one of all most of us have been used to from childhood: how—

> St. Dunstan, as the story goes,
> Once pulled the devil by the nose
> With red-hot tongs, which made him roar,
> That he was heard three miles and more.

Mr. Antony Lower, under the head of 'Inn Signs,' gives a slightly different version. He says that the 'devil and St. Dunstan was a favourite subject among mediæval painters and sculptors'; and adds that 'the tongs with which this feat was performed, together with the hammer and anvil, which the Christian Vulcan was using at the time of the

temptation, were carefully preserved at Mayfield Palace, co. Sussex, where the scene is alleged to have occurred. Saint Dunstan's Bridge, in the same vicinity, is pointed out as the spot where the fiend succeeded in making his escape from the saintly grasp.'

As is very well known, Becket's shrine at Canterbury superseded Dunstan's: hence Fuller says, 'Saints, like new brooms, sweep clean at the first, and afterwards are clean swept out by newer saints which succeed them.' Even in smaller matters the world is fond of a nine-days' wonder.

And I will only add in conclusion that I very well recollect my Talking Friend saying how he heard the priest of Hanwood speak of the successful search made at Canterbury for St. Dunstan's remains by Archbishop Warham, thereby stopping 'the jactitation' of the abbot and convent of Glastonbury about 'Dunstan's corpse, and abusing people with such pretences.' The mandate dates April 22, 1508, and the correspondence between Archbishop Warham and the Abbot of Glastonbury may be seen at the end of Dr. Hook's 'Life of Dunstan.' To have been buried at Glastonbury in those days was no mean thing; all the buried there were thought to be saved! Hence the monkish lines given in Fuller—

> Hic tumulus sanctus, hic scala poli celebratur:
> Vix luit inferni pœnas qui hic tumulatur.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CONQUEST.

Gens dura atque aspera cultu.

VIRGIL, *Æn.* v. 730.

Ill news hath wings, and with the wind doth go;
Comfort 's a cripple, and comes ever slow.

DRAYTON, *Barons' Wars*, i. 114.

2nd Cit. Truly, the hearts of men are full of fear;
You cannot reason almost with a man
That looks not heavily, and full of dread!
3rd Cit. Before the days of change, still is it so:
By a divine instinct men's minds distrust
Ensuing danger; as, by proof, we see
The water swells before a boisterous storm.

Rich. III. act ii. sc. 3.

Won Engeland the fole of Normandie,
That among us woneth yet, and schulleth ever mo:
We schul here aftur in this boke telle of al this wo.

Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle, p. 3, Ed. Hearne, ed. 1810.

As was likely, even although he had the advantage of the priest of Hanwood and the priest of Pontesbury's knowledge for the time being, and taking all things together, and looking to the run of centuries during which the Old Oak stood, the several successive priests were not so ignorant as their neighbours, whilst some were even very learned and very good men; as was likely, nevertheless, the good Old Oak made all sorts of mistakes when he first heard about the Normans. Had they not had ravages enough before from the Danes and Northmen? What did they want with more? They had had quite enough of them. Were they not the patriarchs of the day? Does not the old saw say

Three hundred years they grow,
Three hundred years they stay,
Three hundred years they droop,
And in three more decay?

The marriage of Ethelred to Emma, daughter of Richard II., Duke of Normandy, might have led the Old Oak to confound the Northmen, the Norse, and the Normans. To his heart of oak Swayne and Olaf, and indeed Canute himself, were little else. Did they not all come in their '*snække*' —their lengthy *snake* vessels—from the north? Did not the venerable Oak once hear the priest read the words, '*Malum ego adduco ab Aquilone*,' as he sat beneath his shade with his precious parchment volume in his hands?

'But,' said my Talking Friend, 'if at any time my time-honoured father spoke of the Normans with severity his bones shivered again when he bethought him of the cruel massacre of the Danes A.D. 1002. Never was anything, he said, more barbarous, and, although he thought Ethelred an able king, he could never erase this dreadful act from his memory. His son Edmund Ironsides he mentioned with much feeling, and spoke ominously about his murder. Edric drove home the blow, but he seemed to think he was only the paid perpetrator of the black deed, but that the author of it was of kingly state, evidently meaning Canute.' And I may add here, on the same authority of my Talking Friend, that his aged father had but a very confused view of Edward the Confessor's favouritism towards the Normans, and all that he ever said of Earl Godwin, the herdsman's son, who rose afterwards to such great power, having given his name to the Goodwin Sands, was unfavourable. He thought, likewise, that Harold, his son, was faithless to his oath. The lines in the 'Mirror for Magistrates' express pretty much what the Old Oak thought of Godwin, Earl of Kent. They are thus put into his own mouth :—

> I am that Godwin, some time Earle of Kent,
> Who with King Harrold did conspire to shed
> Prince Alfred's blood, which I too late repent:
> For whereas I upon the glorious bed
> Of spotlesse honour might have laid my head,
> This one black deed of my false treacherie,
> Doth brand my name with spot of infamie.
>
> If from that way my steps had never strai'd,
> Which in my youthful days I first did tread,
> My famous acts, which now are all decai'd,

Had lived in lines of gold; and, in the stead
Of foul defame, with praise had crown'd my head.
But partiall fame lets passe our deedes of praise,
Our worser deed she keeps for future days.

But to return to the Normans, about whom the Old Oak's views were sufficiently indistinct as well as prejudiced. But we must remember he had not travelled, and that his fixed locality was by the Rea side, whereas—

They that most and greatest things embrace
Enlarge thereby their mind's capacity,
As streams enlarged enlarge the channel's space.

We, not perhaps so strong of purpose as the gnarled and knotty Old Oak, but better educated, need not confound the different incursions of the Normans. Looking to history, we find that Gangu Hrolfr, *i.e.* Rollo, Roul, or Rou, left off *walking* by sea in his own land, tall as he was, and took to it elsewhere, leaving the Baltic about the end of the ninth century, and, regardless of his exile, tried first one country and then another, not passing by our own in the days of Alfred, by whose vigilance and determination he was repelled.

Following in the steps of Hastings, who had harassed Flanders, and even Paris itself, Hrolfr, or Rollo, sacked the same line of country in his course, leaving the name of a sea pirate or fierce viking behind him wherever he went. All hopes being lost of expelling him, the French entered into an agreement with him, and proposed to cede to him that part of the country since called Normandy, for which he was to do homage to the crown of France. The difficulty in this matter, and the declaration of the hasty sea rover 'that he would kiss no man's foot, and bend his knees to no man,' must be passed by as generally known to all readers of history. Even the time-honoured Oak had heard of it on the Rea side, and he was certainly not surprised at the burst of Rollo's indignation.

All would be something, though they know not what.

Anyone who looks through the history of the Northmen as contained in the Heimskringla, the Sagas generally,

the Eddas, or the Kjempeviser will perceive at once their character to have been stalwartness, personal strength, and brute courage. There was not anything they held equal to bodily exercise in this sense, and for the mind they cared nothing unless as a mainspring of action. War, in fact, was their element, or feats of war, and to die in bed in peace was a misfortune not to be equalled. Such was the state of things before they left their own territory, and not much otherwise was it when they settled down in Normandy. As Sharon Turner says, 'so rooted in their habits was this spirit of warfare that even in the second century of their occupation of Normandy, and after Christianity had humanised their manners, their priests and bishops still carried arms like the laity, according to the ancient custom of their nation.'

With these views, somewhat moderated, and not quite and altogether as a sea rover, or viking, it was that Rollo came to Normandy, pillaged and wasted by his own people; and so desolate was it that he would not have taken it had not Bretagne been thrown in as a makeweight. Flanders, it is said, was at this time so full of marsh land that he declined to take it altogether. As has been the case in America, Australia, and New Zealand, so was it in earlier European days—the felling of the woods and the draining of the marsh led on to civilisation.

And Rollo, following in the steps of Harold Harfager, the wise king of Norway, and, profiting by experience, followed his counsels, doing, in fact, for Normandy, as best he might, what the fair-haired king had done for Norway.

From Rollo—not the barbarian some have taken him to be after he had embraced Christianity—William the Conqueror was descended. The family, considering the times, was a far-advanced one; though, looking to our own times, rough, hardy, turbulent, and imperious, the fierceness, nevertheless, of the original Norse was tempered by progressing civilisation, and before the invasion of England Normandy was very far in advance. In fact, the Norman race was one which, by amalgamation, was to improve the old Anglo-Saxon stock. I am inclined to think Sharon Turner's account is too favourably drawn, but I shall extract it, as it shows, at least, that

his authorities conceived the Norman Rollo to be a much more civilised duke than many have thought since.

'Rollo, banished for opposing some of the improvements of Harold Harfager in Norway, had the wisdom to feel their importance, and to adopt them in his new domain. He divided the country among his chieftains, afterwards called barons, and distributed proportionate allotments to his followers by the measurement of a rope, from whom military service was exacted. He rebuilt the cities, reploughed the country, and invited settlers from all parts. The very fierceness of his nation compelled him to a strict and sagacious legislation. Accustomed to pillage, the abolition of robbery and theft became essential to the continuance of their social union. A steady justice in his own conduct, an inflexible rigour towards all offenders, and the beneficial results which everyone experienced from these provisions gradually produced a love of equity and subordination to law among his own people, which mainly contributed to their future eminence. Under his administration Normandy is declared to have had neither thieves, plunderers, nor private seditions. He became himself celebrated for his equity, and his subjects rapidly increased in number and prosperity. The adoption of Christianity as his national religion powerfully accelerated all his legislative exertions by enlightening both himself and his countrymen, and by gradually awakening their moral sensibilities.'

This, probably, is too favourable ; but, whether or not so, from this Rollo, who died A.D. 917, was descended William II., Duke of Normandy, who succeeded his father, Robert I., in 1035, and about whom and his antecedents the venerable Oak evidently knew very little, as he confounded them with the rabble rout of the north which at various times harried the Anglo-Saxon race. One was he to have said—

> I do look now for some great misfortunes
> To follow ; for, indeed, mischiefs
> Are like the visits of Franciscan friars,
> They never come to prey upon us single.

Not that the Old Oak was a grumbler—far from it ; his leaves floated pleasantly in the wind, and the sound of the

waters hard by made music with his leaves—but he had seen much of life, and his conclusion was pretty much after Drayton's lines :—

> Ill news hath wings, and with the wind doth go;
> Comfort's a cripple, and comes ever slow.

If, however, the historian's words above quoted seem too favourable, Mr. Borrow's words are too sweeping: 'I have no Norman enthusiasm, and hate and abominate the name of Norman, for I have always associated that name with the deflowering of helpless Englishwomen, the plundering of English homesteads, and the tearing out of poor Englishmen's eyes.' Doubtless, the Norman was lordly and imperious, lustful and cruel; but the Saxon, when the Norman came, was sunk deep in moral degradation. Indeed, the time-honoured Oak admitted as much, and he spoke of the signs in the heavens as ominous. These signs, and God's judgment on the land, are both mentioned in the 'Saxon Chronicle,' and there can be little doubt but that it was a subject of very general conversation amongst thoughtful people.

But were the Saxons altogether unprepared to resist the invaders?

On this point the time-honoured Oak had often heard the priest of Hanwood say that a stouter resistance might have been made than was made: that information had been conveyed inland by the Severn communication and by means of the trading floats that were constantly passing and repassing between Bristol, as it is now called, and Scrobbesbyrig. Indeed, it may be called to mind that it was to the Severn that Godwin directed Ulf after the defeat of the Danes in Warwickshire. To this point, however, the Old Oak did not refer; and, as it was said before, his views of Godwin were not favourable. It is in our days that a very different view has been taken of his character by Thierry, and Dean Hook seems to endorse it.

In his 'History of the Archbishops of Canterbury' this ready writer has remarked: 'With Ethelnoth for his adviser, the principle of his (Canute's) State policy was to abolish all distinctions between the Danish and the Saxon races, and to

form them into a united people. So successful was he in his endeavours that from this time we lose in history the rival parties of Danes and Saxons, both being united, under the common name of the English, in repelling foreign aggression and in resisting the Norman invasion.'

It was with some such information as this before him, not yet recorded in books—for William of Somerset, better known to us as William of Malmesbury, had not yet arisen as an historian—that the priest of Hanwood must have made the statement recorded above, and which was often repeated by the venerable Oak. As for Canute himself, he is better known to general readers by his rebuke of the courtiers on the seashore; by the little bird—the knot—that bears his name; and by the often-repeated lines—much later, by the by, than his day, as they are in a rhymed stanza, about the monks of Ely :—

> Cheerful sang the monks of Ely
> As Knut the king was passing by;
> 'Row to the shore, knights,' said the king,
> 'And let us hear these churchmen sing.'

I never pass Ely without this running through my head.

But I am forgetting the Normans and their invasion, and how the Old Oak said, 'It was an ill wind that brought the Northmen over.' Old Tredithic would have said, 'The weird sisterhood sold them wind in their sealskin bags!' and for his part, were the words of the Old Oak, 'he wished the cuttle had darkened the waters, or that the swordfish had pierced the tympany of their pride, or that a grampus had shouldered them over in his rage. What business had they in the British waters with their *snække* and their long-boats?' And, certainly, their mixed warboats, of all sorts and kinds, were a wild and barbarous medley

> Upon the dimpled bosom of the deep.

As I said before, most of the Old Oak's information on these points was derived from the priest of Hanwood in those days, who appears to have been a man of note. Much as he spoke against the wild fierceness of the Norman, he was not the man to palliate the low degradation, in many instances,

of the Saxon character. None better than he—for he was a clerk—understood the words of the 'Fasti':—

> Conscia mens recti famæ mendacia ridet,
> Sed nos in vitium credula turba sumus.

The peasants of Funen entertain a superstitious notion which has a great truth lurking under it, as, indeed, many, if not most, superstitions have. 'They declare that the ghosts of culprits are compelled to plough to all eternity the fields from which they unlawfully removed the stones; and in the villages of Ryslinge and Lorup they may still be heard at night speeding their ploughs for the benefit of no one.' All conquerors must have much to answer for, and so had William the Conqueror! We flatter ourselves, no doubt, as the Spaniards did before us, that with conquest we are spreading civilisation and the sound of the Gospel; but there are two ways of doing it, and as long as human nature is as it is, sin and conquest have much in common. Ambition, pelf, and filthy lucre, as well as private aggrandisement, are mostwise suttlers in the camp. And so was it now, when William's

> Floating vessel swam
> Uplifted, and secure with beaten prow
> Rode tilting o'er the waves.

As has been before remarked, the little that was known in these parts about the invasion of the Normans came by way of the Severn; and the first the venerable Oak, my Talking Friend's father, heard of it was from some miners who were on their way back from Scrobbesbyrig to the Stiperstones and Shelve. For he heard them say, as they sat to rest beneath his shade, and as they were slaking their thirst at the little runlet, 'Something strange, surely, was expected by the people, for we heard the *mot-bell*, and the *folkmote* were together.'

And I called to mind how, in the days of my boyhood, every meeting at St. Mary's, in Shrewsbury, was to be '*at the toll of the bell*.' And so it is, though

> Time doth efface
> Each day some lingering trace
> Of human government and human care.

But though the inhabitants of the Rea side heard a good deal about the ravages which were committed by the Normans, and though their alarm was certainly very great, yet they bore in mind the ravages of the Danes, which appeared to them, at a distance, quite as great. The truth is, that to the common people, in the bush almost, as Meole then was, the change of masters was not so great as might be supposed. Most of them were little better than slaves—and slaves, in some sense, they continued to be, notwithstanding the old Saxon boast that every man might choose his master. The student of 'Domesday' will see how far this statement is borne out, and I am inclined to think that Archdeacon Hale's statement in the Introduction to 'The Domesday of St. Paul's' must be received under some limitations. 'Personal slavery, by which is meant the right to sell and transfer the slave to any new comer, does not appear to have been an Anglo-Saxon institution; it is doubtful whether a lord possessed a greater property in the servus than is implied in the obligation on the part of the servus to dwell upon the estate, and not to depart from it, but by the licence of his lord.' This, however, is not the place to enter into the difficulties of sockmen, or servi, or villani, or bordarii, or cottarii. This only is evident enough, that where might made right it was uncommon little real liberty that the 'adscripti glebæ' possessed. At the same time it would be an equally great mistake to say that even the people of these times did not take a good deal of liberty to themselves. They had their gaudy days and their boon days—'*dies precariæ*,' I believe they were called—and when a native Saxon enjoyed himself he never did it by halves.

> Though there were some who feelingly could scan
> A lurking trouble in his nether lip;

yet, like the clever alchemist, he extracted as much trouble out of sorrow as he might.

Having referred to Archdeacon Hale's volume just above, I may add here, though a little out of place, that what he says on an after page will be found to be substantially true. 'The relation between landlord and tenant, which we find exem-

plified in the manorial history of the thirteenth century, is of Anglo-Saxon character and origin; and the Norman Conquest, in creating a number of powerful barons, and depressing the Anglo-Saxon thanes, did not alter the relation between the owner and the occupier of the soil which had existed for several centuries.'

The great alteration that took place under the Normans was the introduction of the feudal system, which was totally different from the old Saxon rule, and was, with Saxons of higher rank, a thorough grievance from beginning to end. Nor was it acquiesced in till many reigns had run out.

> Time, whose soft palm heals the wound of war,
> May cure the sore, but never close the scar.

It must always be borne in mind that the Anglo-Saxon king was not the lord of the soil, as the lordly Norman claimed to be. He was rather the chosen of the people, who scorned the base idea of homage and fealty. And here came in a vast difference, which touched not the common people so much, who followed their daily occupations as they had done before, as the athels, or lordly estates—the great earls and nobles of the land. They at once felt the change, and it was the fixed determination of the Conqueror that they should do so, and his followers were quite of one mind with him, and quite ready to take possession.

> Then join they all together,
> Like many clouds consulting for foul weather;

and the broad acres of the old Saxon Thegn had to pay scot and lot to the Bastard of Normandy, or to those who composed his *meing*, and over they came trooping—

> As shoots through the morning sky the lark,
> Or the swan through the summer sea.

All, however, was not smooth sailing, and as the Saxon had struggled with the Dane, so did he with the Norman. And many years afterwards, when the waters and the course of the Severn had tempted the invaders inland, they had to fight hard in the neighbourhood of Scrobbesbyrig to maintain their footing. The venerable Oak, amongst others, used to

mention the name of one Uffa (his name is probably to be detected in the parish of *Uffi*ngton, where the traveller will find the beautiful ruin of Haughmond Abbey), who contrived to maintain his rights for many years. 'He was a man,' he said, 'well known all the country round for dogged and determined resolution. Stranger still, though a Saxon, he was famed far and near for his courtesy and knight-like bearing.' As a modern poet would have expressed it, following in the wake of Virgil's lines—

> He was withal
> A man of elegance and stature tall.

One was he to have said, and to have proved his words *à outrance*, taking up the Norman form of speech, and making his antagonist eat his boastings—

> Sed licet arma feras, et vulnera sæva mineris,
> Non tamen efficies ut timeare mihi.

'True enough,' continued the venerable Oak, 'Uffa was but a ceorl, but such was his brave bearing, such the love of his homestead and his country, reciprocated by all around him, that they said by acclamation, "He is worthy of being a thegn;" and they would add with much pride and satisfaction, as those who had partaken of his hospitalities and felt his affability, "Had he not five hides of land, a church and kitchen, a bell house, and other appendages? and, if so, why should he allow a foreigner to intrude into the patrimony of his fathers?"'

Amongst other things old Uffa stood out against was intermarriage with the Normans. He said it would defile the Saxon race. Evidently he thought that all such marriages were not made in heaven, but ill-mated ones.

> And by imprudence mixed
> Produce prodigious births of body and mind.

We nowadays see that there was a great amount of prejudice in all this, and that the mixture of the several nations—Britons, Romans, Saxons, Jutes, Angles, Danes, and Normans—have made up the English character. But it was not to be wondered at that such opinions should have been rife; for when a land is full of marauders, and violence and bloodshed are

everyday occurrences, and none knows whether his home of to-day may be his home to-morrow, how could reason hold her throne, or how could the oppressed be far-sighted? And I called to mind the words of St. Jerome, A.D. 410, when Rome was plundered by Alaric: '*Ita animus meus occidentalium provinciarum et maximè urbis Romæ vastatione confusus est, ut juxta vulgare proverbium, proprium quoque ignorarem vocabulum; diuque tacui, sciens tempus esse lacrymarum.*'

It may be picked up from old documents and scraps of history that about this time there were many Saxons ready to do as the above-mentioned Uffa did; for when things are come to the worst—when

> Mischief on mischief, curse doth follow curse,
> One ill scarce past, but after comes a worse—

then the spirit of an old people is stirred and roused, and if they can only get their followers to join them there is no knowing what they may accomplish; and what is said in the 'Venus and Adonis' is true every word:—

> An oven that is stopped, or river stayed,
> Burneth more hotly, swelleth with more rage:
> So of concealed sorrow may be said.

In these as well as in preceding days it was necessary that the people should do all that they could to protect themselves, and they did so, as it was likely old Saxon blood would. Hence, as we read, there were sworn brotherhoods between man and man, established and fortified upon 'ad and wed, oath and pledge; and in them we consequently recognise the germ of their sworn communes—*communæ* or *communiæ*—which in the time of the greatest seignorial darkness offered a noble resistance to episcopal and baronial tyranny, and formed the nursing cradles of popular liberty.'

To one of these guilds—gylds or communes—Uffa, according to the venerable Oak, belonged, and he not only vindicated his right by the power of arms, but by the power of the brotherhood also: an association, Mr. Kemble observes, 'not to be confounded either on the one side with the Hanses (the Anglo-Saxon Hósa), *i.e.* trading guilds, or, on the other, with the guilds of crafts ("collegia opificum") of later ages.

Looking to the analogy of the country—gylds, or tithings, (*see* Book I. ch. ix.) we may believe that the whole free town population was distributed into such associations, but that in each town taken altogether they formed a compact and substantive body, called in general the *Burhwara*, and, perhaps sometimes, more especially the *Ingang-burhwara*, or "Burghers' Club."'

Evidently the Old German *gelubde*, or clubs, looked the same way, and even yet we see the old combination for liberty—however mistaken—in the building or other strikes of modern days. Freemasons, probably, approximate the nearest to the old '*ad and wed*.' Glanville, Mr. Kemble tells us, uses *communa* and *gyldæ* as equivalent terms. But what the exact society, club, association, or brotherhood bluff old Uffa belonged to it needs not to inquire further in this place: perhaps

Res est arbitrio non dirimenda meo;

but he was a person always referred to by the time-honoured Oak as one ready to lift his staff and to draw his sword against the Norman, encouraging all around him to bend their bows as good men should and true, who loved their hearths, and their families, and their native land. And as my Talking Friend expatiated on his worth, I bethought me of Milman's lines:—

King,
Calamities are on us, evil days
O'er our isle darken, but the noble wear
Disaster as an angel wears his wings—
To elevate and glorify.

It has been said above that the Normans of Normandy were a greatly improved race, and, as it is very well known, when the Saracens were driven out of Sicily, Roger I., son of Tancred, took the title of Count of Sicily; and Roger II., his son, united it with Naples, and A.D. 1130 was crowned King of the Two Sicilies. Every word of this is true to history.

And yet it is equally true that there was a wild ferociousness about them sometimes, quite a match for the Norse of Scandinavia. Wild they were, when the fit was on, as wild Bersærker, or the storms that fell so suddenly on their native

seas, and like the girl of the wind-swept Orcades, that Scott somewhere tells of, who saw no life in the woods of Scotland when the gale bent their tops and whirled them fearfully and fitfully; they, too, would have joined rather in a viking's rouse and hurly-burly than in any tamer Saxon revel, when the mead flowed less sparingly, and there was no sword-flash. In fact, these Normans, when they crossed over from France to England in William the Conqueror's '*snække*,' took as kindly to the sea as their forefathers had done; and it was not one of those who, at such a time would have used the words of, what Coleridge calls in his 'Sibylline Heroes,' 'the grand old Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens.'

I saw the new moon late yestreen,
With the auld moon in her arm:
And if we gang to sea, master,
I fear we'll come to harm.

The old man that stood on the upper grounds, between Pevensey and Standard Hill, and looked seawards, meditating on ills past and auguring ills to come, and coming close, had deeper thoughts still when he saw the armed vessels approaching and the mailed host on the look-out from their prows. It is Keats who says—

The ocean with its vastness, its blue green,
Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its fears,
Its voice mysterious, which whoso hears
Must think on what will be and what has been.

As for the people in general, hardly able to realise what was coming upon them and upon their country, they could only be described as

Looking like men that deeply were distraught.

Rough times, there was no doubt, were close at hand, and law, if it might be called law (there was little Saxon liberty in a Norman's views), was rough and ready. In fact, every court was but a court of *pie-poudre*, and a man might find his heels dangling in the air before the dust was shaken off his feet. In the words of Gay's witty fable—

I've heard of times (pray God defend us!
We're not so good but He can mend us)

When wicked ministers have trod
On kings and people, law and God ;
With arrogance they girt the throne,
And knew no interest but their own.

No Norman in those days was ever prepared to do things peaceably and quietly. With him it was a word and a blow, and sometimes the blow came first. In the words of another of Gay's fables, 'The Bear in a Boat'—

Alike in sciences and arts,
He boasted universal parts ;
Pragmatic, busy, bustling, bold,
His arrogance was uncontrolled.

Such were the people the old Anglo-Saxons had to encounter, nor was he any common man who, on September 28, A.D. 1066, landed at Pevensey with his 700 vessels, more or less, and struck off for Hastings with a host of 60,000 men and the flower of the nobility of Normandy.

A question there was, too, about Harold's sincerity, and of his right to the crown, all which is a matter of history, and to be read, with variations, in all our annals. Duke William was the man of all others to seize opportunities, and not to let occasion slip, and we may be sure he was ready on the present emergency. Hence he accused Harold of breaking his oaths, declared himself the right successor to the Saxon throne, and, little as he probably cared for the Pope in reality, persuaded him nevertheless to send him a consecrated banner. With such a standard in his hands, what mattered it though Duke William fell down as he landed from the ship? It was after all but a lucky omen: 'The earth was in his hands! British soil was his!' Very probably the story is a made-up one ; however, it did for the nonce, and the Conqueror stepped boldly to the land, and took a forced possession of it.

But of the fight, and other particulars of the invasion, these pages, more particularly referring to local history and general information, are not intended to give an account. Our friend, the Old Oak, knew little or nothing about the Battle of the Standard ; all he knew was from the priest of Hanwood and the passers-by, and it was a long while after the

fight that any tidings reached the banks of the Rea. When, however, the news did come, it came, as usual, with exaggeration of every sort; and the general idea was that the people would be reduced to abject slavery, and that the so-called Saxon liberty was at an end.

It has been before stated how small this liberty was; that the changes which took place for many years to come were rather nominal than real. It was not the Mercians, but the South Saxons who felt most the invasion of the Normans and the cruelties they exercised, for it is not to be denied that their sway was cruel, and their hand an iron hand, insomuch that chroniclers said such barbarities would not be credited by posterity.

In this light are to be understood the words of the people of Kent, as recorded by John Stowe the Chronicler, on the authority of Thomas Spot and William Thorne, who, with Archbishop Stigand and Eglesene, the Abbot of St Augustine's for their spokesmen, declared the whole land to be in an evil state; 'and that whereas in this realm of England before the coming of the foresaid Duke William there were no bondsmen, now all, as well noblemen as the common people, were, without respect, made subject to the perpetual bondage of the Normans.'

Again, as regards the administration of the law, the Saxons would say of the Normans what the Mexicans said of the Spaniards, and what the Hindus and the Mahometans have said of us in India, 'there was no law for them!' And no doubt might did very often make right. But it is to be hoped it was not altogether as Speed expresses it: 'The ancient laws of the land he abrogated for the most part, ordaining new, nothing so equal nor so easy to be kept; which (his laws) although they nearly concerned the English, and therefore ought of them to have been familiarly known, were notwithstanding written in the harsh Norman tongue, which they understood not; so that many persons, partly by the iniquity of the law itself, partly by ignorance in misconstruction, and often also by the sleights of phrases and judges, who might pretend for law what they list, were wrongfully condemned in forfeiture of goods, lands, yea, and

also of life, and generally so entangled with their unknown interpretation, and tortured with their delays, turmoils, and traverses, that they rather chose to give over their suits than to follow them with their endless vexations.' In some sense this is the description of law still ; but as Lord Brooke said—

> Yet princes shall
> Oft find mischance upon misdoing fall.
> For howsoever to the partial throne
> Of mighty power the acts of truthless wit
> May current go, like brass, amongst their own,
> Yet when the world shall come to judge of it,
> Nature, that in her wisdom never lies,
> Will show deceit and wrong are never wise.

But likely enough the South Saxon had often to give place to tyrannous injustice and to the bitter wrongs which scarcely reached the Mercian, and he might have said, in another old poet's words—

> Who is opprest with a little wrong,
> Revenging it, he may it soon increase ;
> Far better is it for to suffer long
> An injury, as for to keep the peace,
> Than to begin which he shall never cease :
> War once begun, it is hard to know
> Who shall abide, and who shall overthrow.

Under any circumstances, as respects Norman and Saxon, it was certainly the latter which occupied the place of the lamb in the fable.

But when it began to be spread abroad that the Normans were coming, and first one and then another spoke alarmedly of many cruel acts and deeds they had heard of, and which came by way of the Severn, the time-honoured Oak was no alarmist, but heart of oak still ; and in after days he used to say to my Talking Friend, his son, the Oakling, 'that all came to pass as he augured it would, and that those of mean estate, and who lived in out-of-the-way places, suffered comparatively little, though the very lands on which they dwelt were distributed amongst the lords and high estates of Normandy at the will of the Conqueror.'

Meanwhile, as before stated, when all was confusion and alarm the Old Oak stood firm, as was befitting heart of oak

should, and it was several years before either the *villani* or the *servi* in his vicinity were much interfered with. The little property the former had they kept as attached or appurtenant to their several manors; and the latter, or the villains in gross, still tilled the ground and worked hard for their daily bread, and probably were almost as well provided for as under Saxon rule. By-and-by, indeed, when they betook themselves to the towns, as so many did (for it is pretty evident that they could purchase their freedoms), their lot was greatly improved, and they became artisans, and were numbered in the guilds.

And the Old Oak said, 'They may boast of their *Ash* trees, and may dub their villains *Ash*men if they please, though in reality but "*creekers*," running into every creek and *wick*, or *vik*; but in my opinion the Oak is the king of trees, and heart of oak never yields! Let the Norman do his worst, and we will see if we cannot yet do our best!'

Where the time-honoured Oak picked up this bit of curious information my Talking Friend could not tell me. Probably the *Ash*, which is frequently spoken of as an evergreen in ancient story, the yggdrasil of the Edda, is after all but an ilex. Years ago, when I numbered amongst my Danish friends and acquaintance such men as Peter Erasmus Müller, the author of the 'Saga-Bibliothek' now before me, and Rask, and Finn Magnussen, and Oehlenschläger, and others, I might have pursued the subject; but this is not the place for it, or for discussions on the Eddas, in prose or verse.

> Omnia fert ætas, animum quoque; sæpe ego longos
> Cantando puerum memini me condere soles:
> Nunc oblita mihi tot carmina.

The classical reader may call to mind that '*carmen*' means either a verse or a spell, and he may refer the lines of Virgil's Eclogue to the verse or prose Eddas, as he will.

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME

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